

To: Councillor Dennis (Chair)
Councillors Hoskin, Ayub, Ballsdon, Barnett-
Ward, Cresswell, Cross, Gavin, Hacker, Keane,
McEwan, Naz, Nikulina, Rowland, Stevens,
Thompson and Yeo

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2 March 2026

Your contact is: **Julie Quarmby - Committee Services (julie.quarmby@reading.gov.uk)**

NOTICE OF MEETING - HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE 10 MARCH 2026

A meeting of the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee will be held on Tuesday, 10 March 2026 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading. The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

	<u>WARDS AFFECTED</u>	<u>Page No</u>
1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST		
Councillors to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in relation to the items for consideration.		
2. DELEGATED DECISIONS		
3. MINUTES OF THE HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS & LEISURE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 NOVEMBER 2025		5 - 12
4. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES		13 - 24
Minutes of the Community Safety Partnership Meetings held on 25 September and 27 November 2025.		
5. QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC		

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6. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Councillor questions may be submitted on any matter within the Committee's responsibilities. Submissions should be emailed to committee.services@reading.gov.uk and must be received no later than 12 noon, four clear working days before the meeting.

7. ROMAN BRITAIN - REIMAGINED IN READING 25 - 34

A report seeking spend approval for the Roman Britain - Reimagined in Reading Project and setting out details of delivery activities.

8. ALLOTMENTS - FEES & CHARGES CONSULTATION 35 - 88

This report informs the Committee of the findings from the allotment fee consultation with allotment plot holders, and seeks approval of the proposed allotment fees pricing structure.

9. PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING: A STRATEGY FOR READING 2026 – 2031 89 - 348

This report seeks approval for the *Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A strategy for Reading 2026 - 2031*, along with its accompanying Action Plan.

10. RBC LANDLORD SERVICES – APRIL TO DECEMBER 2025 PERFORMANCE REPORT 349 - 368

This report provides an update on the performance of RBCs Housing Landlord Service delivered year to date, up to and including December 2025 and seeks endorsement of the themes and programmes of the service improvement plan against the consumer standards.

11. PROGRAMME OF WORKS TO COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK 2026/27 369 - 386

A report setting out the maintenance work programme for Council Homes for 2026/27.

12. ALLOCATIONS SCHEME UPDATE 387 - 446

A report seeking approval of the proposed amendments to the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme, for adoption and implementation in April 2026.

**13. HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME 2026/2027 & BOROUGHWIDE 447 - 466
2025/2026 HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE UPDATE**

This report informs the Committee of the Department for Transport's Highway Maintenance Award 2026/27 Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport & Highway Maintenance) settlement, and seeks scheme and spend approval. It also provides an update on the progress of year 4 (2025/26) of the Council's additional £8M 5-year (2022/23 to 2026/27) Highway Capital Roads & Pavements Investment Programme and the completion of the Highway Maintenance 2025/26 DfT Local Transport Block Funded Capital Works Programme.

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Agenda Item 3

HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE 12 NOVEMBER 2025

Present: Councillor Dennis (Chair), Ballsdon, Barnett-Ward, Cresswell, Cross, Gavin, Hacker, Keane, McEwan, Naz, Nikulina, Rowland, Thompson and Yeo.

Apologies: Councillor Ayub, Hoskin and Stevens

13. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Nikulina declared an interest in Item 19 as her employer had been involved in the library development.

14. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING & MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the meeting of 9 July 2025 were confirmed as a correct record.

Further to Minutes 9 (3) and (4) of the previous meeting, relating to the proposal to implement a Borough-wide Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO), Councillor Rowland reported that the Council had asked for a statement of clarity from the police about the definitions of antisocial behaviour around e-bikes and e-scooters. No statement had yet been received but was hopefully anticipated. Councillor Rowland also explained that the report which had been expected to come to the Committee detailing the PSPO consultation feedback with recommendations on implementing any new restrictions or amendments was now being submitted to the Policy Committee on 17 November 2025, the papers for which were available online.

Resolved - That the position be noted.

15. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meeting were submitted:

Community Safety Partnership – 3 April and 17 July 2025.

Resolved - That the Minutes be received.

16. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
Melvina Dimmott	Housing Repair	Cllr Yeo

The full text of the question and reply was made available on the Reading Borough Council website.

17. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

<u>Questioner</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reply</u>
Cllr Nikulina	Possibility of Leasing a Second Narrow-Access Bin Lorry	Cllr Rowland
Cllr Keane	Fly-Tipping on Non-Council Land	Cllr Rowland

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The full text of the questions and replies was made available on the Reading Borough Council website.

18. READING FESTIVAL UPDATE

The Committee received a presentation from Claire Armstrong, Melvin Benn, Vicky Chapman and Charlotte Oliver from Festival Republic, giving an update on the 2025 Reading Festival and setting out plans for the 2026 event. The presentation and subsequent discussion included:

- The 2025 festival had been a big success, although the event had not been quite at full capacity.
- There had been an increase in the number of themed camping areas, including Solo, Access, Eco, Glitterball and Calm, which reflected the changes in festival-goer demographics, particularly post-Covid. These sites could be booked in advance. The Get Ready With Me (GRWM) stations, providing hair styling tools, mirrors etc had proved very popular, although there would be improvements to the sign-up system to prevent double booking for future years.
- AIR (Assistance, Information and Response) Hubs had continued to improve, with festival-goers never being more than 200 metres from a Hub if they needed support.
- The Festival had addressed the previous year's complaints about noise from the Chevron Stage by moving it inside a marquee, which had reduced external noise levels and created a good atmosphere for the attendees.
- On and off-site traffic management had worked well, although it was still proving difficult to encourage attendees to be dropped off/picked up away from Richfield Avenue where possible, to avoid congestion. The use of the Festival Bridge and River Taxis had also continued to support alternative travel.
- More partners, including Safe Space, had been involved in the promotion of safeguarding and welfare. Particular emphasis had been placed on zero tolerance of violence against women and girls (VAWG), spiking, drug and alcohol use and looking out for each other, with posters and messages on the large screens to help raise awareness. It was noted that an increase in reported incidents could reflect an increase in people feeling comfortable to report rather than an increase in the number of incidents, and that more data would be needed before any conclusions could be drawn.
- The Festival was staffed by 6-7,000 paid staff, plus volunteers. Volunteers raised money for charity and were more committed, plus they received a free ticket to the event.
- There had been continuing efforts both back and front of house to improve sustainability, which had led to a further decrease in emissions and waste, with overall waste down by 17% and an approximate decrease of 20% in the tonnage of tents left behind. A range of measures had been aimed at festival-goers including Look Out For Our Planet, competitions and rewards. Festival Republic would look to provide greater details on energy use per attendee and total water use going forward.
- Plans for the 2026 Festival included continuous improvements in safeguarding and VAWG, reviewing the named campsites to provide the best possible experience for customers, and expanding them if required, further work on how to persuade people to take all of their camping equipment home, expansion of

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GRWM tents and investigation of groundworks to identify solutions to the very dusty ground caused by a dry summer.

Resolved - That the presentation be noted.

19. STUDIO THEATRE AT THE HEXAGON

The Committee received a presentation and a report giving an update on progress with the new Studio Theatre at the Hexagon. The report explained that work was progressing in accordance with the construction programme and that the Studio Theatre was expected to open to the public in spring 2027. The report added that, over the summer, the back of house had been demolished and a new temporary back of house had been installed. Work was happening to provide a new kitchen that would serve the Hexagon as well as the Studio Theatre, and this was anticipated to open in autumn 2025. The report also explained that the operational and business planning to programme the Hexagon and Studio Theatre from 2027 as complementary venues would start in the coming months.

The Studio Theatre would be state of the art and was anticipated to provide a circa 200 seat flexible theatre (circa 300 standing) with step-free access, accessible toilets on all floors, hearing loops, bar and catering facilities. The Studio Theatre would be easily accessible from town centre transport links, offering a better customer experience and an improved operational environment for visiting companies.

Resolved:

That the progress on the development of the new Studio Theatre at the Hexagon, scheduled to open in spring 2027, be noted.

20. READING LIBRARIES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME: STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES/ THEMES 2025 – 2029

Further to Minute 29 of the meeting held on 11 March 2025, the Committee considered a report that set out a final version of the strategic principles and priorities proposed for libraries improvement following public consultation. The six principles, set out below, were referred to as ‘themes’ for ease of understanding:

- Ensuring all libraries in the borough’s network responded to the needs of communities and partners and building these into external funding applications.
- Supporting children and young people with reading, literacy and language development.
- Improving digital provision, access and content to support learning and skills.
- Supporting improvements for Reading’s health, wellbeing, literacy and cohesion.
- Bringing arts, culture, heritage and creativity into library spaces.

Details of the results of the public consultation were attached to the report at Appendix 1. The consultation exercise on the priorities had also gathered feedback regarding the new Reading Central Library design.

The report explained that the Council’s ambition with these new themes was to deliver a library service across Reading with a high-quality community offer of books, IT and support. This supported the new flagship Reading Central Library in the town centre, with Reading’s residents and organisations using all library buildings for reading, work, digital

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skills and study, increasing users and usage of Council services. It was proposed that Libraries in the Borough would be spaces that further supported equality, development and wellbeing achieved, in part, through successfully securing external funding.

The report stated that the endorsed themes would start immediately and feed into the next round of service planning for libraries, covering the period including the opening of the new Central Library anticipated in 2026.

Resolved:

- (1) That the strategic principles for the library service for 2025-2029, noted at section 3.13 of the report, following the July 2025 public engagement on the draft principles agreed on 11 March 2025, be adopted;**
- (2) That the feedback given regarding the new Central Library from the exercise carried out in July 2025 and the huge opportunity arising from Reading opening a new Central Library during the 2026 National Year of Reading be noted;**
- (3) That the success of the library service in delivering against the strategic principles since inception in 2021, meaning that library issues in Reading have increased year-on-year since the pandemic, be noted.**

(Councillor Nikulina declared an interest in this application as her partner had been involved in the library development. She left the meeting and took no part in the debate or decision.)

21. HIGHWAY ASSET MANAGEMENT 2025/26 UPDATE REPORT

The Committee received a report setting out details of a review carried out on the gully cleansing regime and seeking endorsement of the proposed changes to the Highway Gully Cleaning Regimes. The report also informed the Committee of the Annual Status Options Reports (ASOR) for the condition of the Carriageways, Footways and Bridges. The following documents were attached to the report:

Appendix 1 – Carriageways ASOR Summary 2025

Appendix 2 – Footways ASOR Summary 2025

Appendix 3 – Structures ASOR Summary 2025.

The report explained that the Council managed over 18,500 gullies on the public highway network which currently received an annual clean. The Highways & Drainage Operations Team (H&D) visited each gully with the Gully Emptying Machine and recorded the condition findings for the Highway Asset Management database. The gully cleaning records showed that over the last two years the majority of gullies within Unclassified Residential Roads had not required additional cleanses and could be cleansed less frequently without a significant increase in risk of flooding. Cleaning these gullies annually was limiting the capacity to address more urgent gullies that required more frequent cleaning. The proposal was to amend the gully cleansing frequency for the majority of the Unclassified Roads (Residential) from an annual visit to a bi-annual (every two years), cleaning regime, while acknowledging that some Unclassified Roads would

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still need an annual cleaning regime, as they were known to be in areas where there was high leaf fall and other known drainage issues. The report stated that it was not proposed to amend the gully cleaning regimes on the Classified (A, B & C) Roads, on the strategic routes with the highest volumes and class of traffic and presenting the highest risk, which would therefore remain the highest priority. The capacity generated within this amended gully cleaning regime would allow those gullies that needed more regular cleaning to receive an enhanced clean, either every six or three months in some cases where there were repeated call outs due to slow running gullies or repeated blockages.

The report stated that the Council had invested £17m into improving Roads and Pavements (footways) in Reading since 2020/21 and this had brought the condition of the Classified Major Roads to a good condition. The Council was now looking to bring forward an extensive and cost-effective preservation programme in the coming years to maintain a good steady state. The Council had also extensively invested in the Unclassified (Residential) road network since 2020/21 and 79% of these roads were now in a 'Green' or good condition.

The report also explained that the level of satisfaction with carriageways and footways, using the NHT (National Highways and Transport Network) survey, compared well to other authorities, with all indicators above national averages. The Council's investment was bringing the condition of the public footways to a 'steady state', and the Council was now looking to bring forward a preservation cost effective programme in the coming years to maintain a good steady state.

The report stated that the Council managed a stock of 275 highway structures, of which 19 structures were in need of strengthening and 16 were currently rated to be in a 'poor' condition. The ASOR report had confirmed that the current routine, reactive and cyclical maintenance revenue budget was sufficient and that over the next five financial years approximately £1.430m per annum was to be invested in structures maintenance which would enable nine structures to be strengthened and three 'poor' condition structures to be refurbished. The Council would continue to seek funding from Department of Transport for addressing the Bridges backlog as and when opportunities arose. The report also noted that 'poor' condition structures did not mean that they were unsafe and needed to be closed as often only one element of the structure was in poor condition and just that element required strengthening or replacement, not the entire structure.

Resolved:

- (1) That the proposed changes to the Highway Gully Cleaning Regimes be endorsed;**
- (2) That the Annual Status Option Reports (ASORs) for condition of the Council's Carriageways, Footways & Bridges be noted.**

22. WINTER SERVICE MAINTENANCE PLAN 2025-26

The Committee considered a report that set out details of the outputs that had been delivered by the Winter Service Plan 2024-25 and of the Winter Service Plan review that had been carried out to ensure compliance with the Highway Act 1980 and 'Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice'. It also sought approval for the Winter Service Plan 2025-2026. A copy of the Winter Service Plan 2024-2025 was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

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The report explained that the 2024-2025 winter season had been relatively mild overall but there had been numerous occasions when the temperature had reached the trigger point for precautionary salting action, (below 1⁰C and predicted to go below freezing), resulting in 54 primary runs and four secondary runs. The colder spells had not been severe nor prolonged enough for activation of the Snow Plan. By comparison there had been 34 primary runs and three secondary runs during the previous winter season 2023/2024. There had been no issues with salt supply/delivery which had enabled the contractor to maintain stock levels throughout the winter season. There had been no issues with the contractor replenishing the grit bins as and when required. The winter decision making process to determine when to salt had worked well during the last winter season and the Vaisala weather stations had provided the correct data for informed decisions to be made.

The report added that the joint arrangement/agreement with Wokingham Borough Council, through their Consultants, Volker Highways, to provide gritting decision making had worked well and delivered against the set key performance indicator. The Winter Service Plan 2024/2025 had provided a robust service for the duration of the Winter period with no disruption to the primary and secondary road network.

A review of the Winter Service Plan 2024-2025 had been carried out and the main points, including updates for the Winter Service Plan 2025-2026, were summarised in the report.

Resolved -

- (1) That the outputs delivered by the Winter Service Plan 2024-2025 be noted;**
- (2) That the outcome of the Winter Service Plan review carried out to ensure compliance with the Highways Act 1980 and 'Well-managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice' be noted;**
- (3) That the Winter Service Plan 2025-2026 be approved.**

23. RBC LANDLORD SERVICES – APRIL TO JULY 2025 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee received a report providing an update on the performance of Reading Borough Council's Housing Landlord Service delivered year to date, up to and including July 2025, following the inspection by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) which had concluded in April 2025.

The Housing Landlord service was working with the RSH under Provider Improvement, and it was anticipated that regular meetings with the RSH would continue for a minimum of 12 months, after which the Regulator might consider reinspection or regrading. The Service needed to demonstrate sustained change embedded across the service, achieving positive outcomes for tenants and it had received positive feedback from the RSH in relation to progress made on the Service Improvement Plan to date. The Regulator had also complimented the Service on the volume of the work in progress to address the root cause of issues and ensure sustainable change. The Housing Landlord Service remained committed to continuous improvement and regulatory compliance, ensuring that tenants received safe, secure, and high-quality housing services.

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The report explained that Landlord performance was monitored against the four Consumer Standards:

- Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard (including Tenant Satisfaction Measures);
- Tenancy Standard;
- Safety and Quality Standard;
- Neighbourhood and Community Standard.

To meet these new standards, housing providers were required to ensure that performance was reported transparently and subject to robust oversight through their established governance structures. In the last period an additional 'cross party working group' had been formed to provide further opportunities to share progress and encourage scrutiny of performance and key issues. Housing Services also submitted a performance update to the Committee on a regular basis to provide clear insight into performance and support informed scrutiny, challenge, and strategic discussion.

The report stated that a comprehensive Service Improvement Plan had been developed to address the root causes identified during the inspection alongside wider service improvements. The Plan was being actively monitored and delivered through cross-service collaboration, with a focus on ensuring that all actions were delivered, achieved the desired outcomes, embedded sustainable change and were aligned with the Consumer Standards.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Housing Landlord Service Performance and key achievements delivered year to date, up to and including July 2025, be noted;**
- (2) That the themes and programmes of the Service Improvement Plan against the Consumer Standards (Appendix 1) be endorsed.**

(The meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.31 pm).

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Agenda Item 4

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP EXECUTIVE GROUP – 25 SEPTEMBER 2025

Present:

Cllr Karen Rowland	Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety, RBC (Chair)
Cllr Terry	Leader, RBC
Cath Marriott	Consultant
Colin Hudson	Thames Valley Police (Vice-Chair)
Melissa Wise	Executive Director of Social Care and Health
Jo Middlemass	Community Safety and Enablement Manager, RBC
Sarah Gardner	Community Safety, RBC
Rob Abell	RBC
Zoe Hanim	Prevent/Channel Lead, RBC
Jill Marston	RBC
Lianne Lewis	Deputy Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children and Looked After Children, BOB ICB
Hayley Berrington	Deputy Head West Berkshire Probation Delivery
Michael Greenway	OPCC
Gail Muirhead	Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service
Rachel Spencer	RVA
Carly Newman	Young Voices (for items 8-13)
Simon Hill	Committee Services, RBC

Apologies:

Emma Gee	RBC
Bryony Hall	RBC
Matt Pearce	RBC
Martin White	RBC
Alastair Harsant	RBC
Emma Tompkins	TVP
Stephen Leonard	TVP

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

2. PREVENT UPDATE

Zoe Hanim gave a presentation on recent Prevent activity and the 2025-26 Prevent Action Plan. The presentation noted that achievements in 2024/25 included being assessed at 'exceeding' on all Prevent Duty Benchmarks by the Home Office, various engagement and training events and a partner response to public disorder in summer 2024. The Counter Terrorism Local Profile key areas for consideration for Action Plans were set out, including the importance of engagement with younger audiences, including those in geographically or socially isolated communities, the need for the types of referrals made to be reflective of the wider threat picture, and that a full and accurate assessment of local threat relied upon reporting from partners and local communities.

The Group were asked to endorse the 2025/26 Prevent Action Plan which set out key actions against the objectives to i) engage with communities to develop understanding and awareness of risks and work together with a focus on keeping safe from harm online, and ii) to safeguard individuals and communities through early intervention and provide support to individuals who might be susceptible to being drawn into terrorism.

The presentation also set out a number of key changes to Prevent policy which had been put in place after a review of Prevent by the Home Office last autumn and reflecting increasing complex needs of Channel cases.

AGREED:

- (1) That the 2025-26 Prevent Action Plan be endorsed;**
- (2) That the Group continue to receive a Prevent update report at each meeting in order to monitor current issues.**

3. OPCC & PARTNERSHIP FUND UPDATES

Mike Greenaway (OPCC) gave a verbal update on recent OPCC activity including the use of the Partnership Fund for projects that would help meet local and PCC priorities.

Sarah Gardner gave a presentation outlining the Partnership Fund projects in Reading: Young Voice, New Angles boxing camp, School Navigator programme, AI Youth and SOAR self-defence. She was working with Mike on arrangements for monitoring and measuring the impact of the projects and it was planned to bring progress reports to the next meeting.

The Group noted that there would be further funding opportunities from the Partnership Fund and that partners should look out for potential projects for development that would address different needs than those already funded.

AGREED:

- (1) That a written update on OPCC activities be circulated with the next agenda;**
- (2) That a progress report for each of the Reading projects funded by the Partnership Fund be submitted to the next meeting.**

4. DOMESTIC ABUSE PARTNERSHIP BOARD (DAPB) REVIEW

Cath Marriott submitted a report and gave a presentation with Jo Middlemass on a review of the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board (DAPB). The DAPB had formed in 2021 and the findings of the recent JTAI had added impetus to the need to review the current state of the Board and its partnership working. The review had also considered examples of good practice from elsewhere. Recommendations were made under the following headings:

- Clarify Governance, Purpose & Decision-Making
- Strengthen Partner Ownership (to improve engagement and accountability)
- Build Data and Intelligence Capability
- Strengthen Strategic Alignment
- Embed Voice and Lived Experience
- Incorporate Commissioning functions
- Develop an impact-focussed culture
- Other

The presentation also highlighted a recommended approach for the CSP in overseeing the DAPB and that the CSP should model healthy partnership challenge, intentional active engagement, ensuring impact not just activity, and decision-making transparency.

It was noted that there were a total of 50 recommendation and that the DAPB should identify those of highest priority in developing an initial draft action plan.

AGREED:

- (1) That the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board review and prioritise the recommendations made by the review and develop an initial draft action plan;**
- (2) That the draft action plan be circulated to the Group for discussion at the next meeting;**
- (3) That a scoping exercise to explore chairing arrangements, including consideration for an independent chair, be agreed.**

5. DOMESTIC HOMICIDE REVIEW

Jo Middlemass outlined the circumstances of two cases, A and G, and summarised initial scoping reviews carried out by a Panel. The meeting were reminded of the purpose of a DHR and the definition as set out in the relevant legislation.

AGREED:

- (1) That a DHR be carried out for Case A;**
- (2) That no DHR be carried out for Case G, on the grounds that there was no personal relationship between the two parties and noting the Home Office advice that a Mental Health Homicide Review would be better suited to this case.**

6. TOWN CENTRE SAFETY MEETING PROPOSAL

Colin Hudson outlined proposals for a Town Centre Safety meeting following a review of the approach to the night time economy and other town centre issues. He proposed that a group meet every six weeks until early 2026 to look at a range of safety issues relating to the night time economy and town centre including violence against women and girls, CCTV, and licensed premises, to consider the extent to which the current approach was working and whether there were opportunities to improve and to seek funding for additional work.

It was noted that the CSP should consider its strategic approach to wider current issues around community anxiety and communication around community safety which would be beyond the scope of the proposed meeting.

AGREED:

- (1) That the representatives of the Council and TVP continue to discuss the proposal for a Town Centre Safety meeting to be introduced and report into the CSP;**
- (2) That the CSP give further consideration to how a community safety communications strategy should be developed.**

7. CONSULTATION UPDATE – PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER

Sarah Gardner gave a presentation summarising public consultation on the draft Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO). There had been 425 responses with a large majority

being supportive of the proposed restrictions. The next steps would be to finalise consultation feedback and prepare a report to the Council's Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee with a recommendation to proceed with implementing a PSPO. A number of key tasks would then form an implementation plan which would be submitted to the Group's next meeting.

AGREED:

- (1) That the response to the consultation be noted;**
- (2) That an update be given to the next meeting to report on the formal decision made by the Council on the PSPO and outline the proposed plan for implementation.**

8. CONSULTATION UPDATE – COMMUNITY SAFETY SURVEY

Sarah Gardner gave a presentation setting out the results of the annual Community Safety survey, which had run over the summer with 722 respondents. The presentation summarised the responses with a comparison to the 2024 results. Responses showed that 50.4% of respondents thought that Reading was a safe place, 46.3% thought that crime in their neighbourhood had increased in the last 12 months, 57.5% thought that ASB in their neighbourhood had increased and 52.4% were not aware of any hate crime in their neighbourhood. 45.4% felt fairly safe and 27.1% completely safe in their neighbourhood in the daytime; for nighttime safety 44% felt either fairly safe or not safe. It was noted that there was more analysis to do and that the data would help inform the Strategic Needs Assessment for the Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy for 2026-9.

It was suggested that comparative data for similar local authority areas would provide helpful context for considering the Reading survey results and identifying any specific concerns for the CSP.

AGREED:

- (1) That the Survey results be noted and an action plan be presented to a future meeting of the Group;**
- (2) That the RBC Policy team investigate whether any comparative survey data was available for similar CSP areas.**

9. PARTNER UPDATE - YOUNG VOICES

Carly Newman gave an update on the Young Voices annual safety survey and other recent Young Voices activity. The survey had identified issues of most concern to young people, the places they felt safest, feelings of being safe or unsafe, perceptions of crime and crimes seen. It had also covered online content and radicalisation.

Carly also updated the Group on a summit planned for November and successful engagement with Reading Buses to use postcode information from schools to anticipate demand for bus journeys to and from school, to help reduce the risk of young people being left to wait at a stop due to overcrowding.

AGREED: That a written summary and analysis of the Young Voices annual safety survey and outline action plan be circulated for discussion at the February CSP.

11. OTHER PARTNER UPDATES

Voluntary and Community Sector

R Spencer gave an update on a VCS discussion of community tensions and effect on communities as well as VCS groups, especially those supporting refugees and asylum seekers.

Probation

An update was given on a recent drop-in event and a Probation Forum to be launched next week.

Safer Neighbourhood Forums

There were no Forum Chairs in attendance at the meeting.

AGREED: That the updates be noted.

12. COMMUNICATION AND EVENTS

Sarah Gardner outlined upcoming CSP Campaigns and events.

AGREED: That partners contact Sarah Gardner for further details of any events they would like to participate in.

13. DATES OF FUTURE MEETING

The next meetings for 2025/26 would take place on:

27 November 2025 (Teams)
19 February 2026
16 April 2026

All meetings start at 9.30am, venue to be confirmed.

(The meeting closed at 12.49 pm)

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COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP EXECUTIVE GROUP – 27 NOVEMBER 2025

Present:

Cllr Karen Rowland	Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety, RBC (Chair)
Umi Abdulmutlawib	RBC
Hayley Berrington	Deputy Head West Berkshire Probation Delivery Unit
Sarah Gardner	Community Safety, RBC
Michael Greenway	OPCC
Matt Golledge	Interim Assistant Director, Planning, Transport & Public Protection, RBC
Zoe Hanim	Prevent/Channel Lead, RBC
Kathy Kelly	Designated Head of Safeguarding Adults Berkshire West, BOB ICB
Cath Marriott	Consultant
Jo Middlemass	Community Safety and Enablement Manager, RBC
Gail Muirhead	Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service (RBFRS)
Carly Newman	Young Voices (for items 7-10)
Lara Patel	Executive Director of Children's Services, RBC
Rachel Spencer	RVA
Cllr Terry	Leader, RBC
Melissa Wise	Executive Director of Social Care and Health
Nicky Simpson	Committee Services, RBC

Apologies:

Sally Andersen	RBC
Ollie Foxell	RBC
David Grayson	RBFRS
Bryony Hall	RBC
Alastair Harsant	RBC
Colin Hudson	Thames Valley Police (Vice-Chair)
Stephen Leonard	TVP
Amanda Nyeke	RBC
Matt Pearce	RBC
Emma Tompkins	TVP

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

2. PREVENT UPDATE

Zoe Hanim gave a presentation giving an update on recent Prevent activity against the 2025-26 Prevent Action Plan's objectives and key actions.

It was suggested that a Task and Finish Group should be set up under the Prevent Management Board to look at community communications, involving key representatives with influence. The Task and Finish Group could look at best practice and what worked well elsewhere, put together a skeletal plan for the Management Board to look at, possibly in January 2026, and then come back to the next CSP meeting, or to a future meeting if necessary. Gail Muirhead and Rachel Spencer expressed interest in being involved.

AGREED:

- (1) That the progress against the 2025-26 Prevent Action Plan be noted;
- (2) That Zoe Hanim contact Matt Golledge about getting feedback from staff in partner organisations about how reporting was working;
- (3) That Zoe Hanim have further conversations with Rachel Spencer about how to make it clearer how to make Prevent referrals;
- (4) That Zoe Hanim and Jo Middlemass set up a Task & Finish Group under the Prevent Management Board to look at community communications, to include key representatives with influence, including Rachel Spencer and Gail Muirhead, to look at best practice and what worked well elsewhere, put together a skeletal plan for the Management Board to look at and come back to a future CSP.

3. DOMESTIC ABUSE UPDATE

a) Domestic Abuse Partnership Board Review

Cath Marriott gave a presentation on the progress of the review of the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board (DAPB). She stated that a workshop had been held on 25 November 2025, including to make decisions on the Terms of Reference, but there had been poor attendance, with only nine attendees, from only four out of the 11 organisations, so the meeting had not been quorate.

The presentation covered the decisions progressed, the Board's improvement journey, next steps, critical success factors, the importance of using theory of change and use of the MoSCoW tool to support decision-making and prepare an implementation plan, inputs/activities/outputs/outcomes/impacts, mechanisms of change, assumptions, risk factors and mitigations. Critical success factors were listed as:

- Renewed commitment to DAPB attendance, engagement & clarity
- Some front-loaded effort (eg Extraordinary Board and/or Workshop)
- Intentional use of proposed tools and frameworks
- Pace of activity and communication

It was noted that the proposal was to have quarterly DAPB meetings with check-ins in-between, and attendance at both these meetings and any extraordinary boards or workshops was important. It was suggested that the lack of attendance might be due to lack of clarity about why people were there, so it was suggested that something be prepared for the DAPB Chair to share with partners to set out the expectations of those attending the Board, in order to encourage commitment and attendance (whilst noting that this should not put pressure on those agencies who *had* attended).

Support was expressed for development of an implementation plan using the suggested tools.

AGREED:

- (1) That Jo Middlemass, Cath Marriott and Melissa Wise and Lara Patel work together to prepare something for the DAPB Chair to share with partners to set out the expectations of those attending the Board in order to encourage commitment and attendance;
- (2) That Jo Middlemass and Cath Marriott produce an Implementation plan from the Review to take to the DAPB;

- (3) That Jo Middlemass and Cath Marriott bring a report to the February CSP on progress.**

b) Domestic Abuse Update & Domestic Homicide Review

Umi Abdulmutwalib submitted a Domestic Abuse highlight report and outlined the latest situations with progress on two DHR cases, A and G, explaining that the procurement process for a Chair for the DHR for Case A was under way and that a queried DHR for Case G was being explored by a Scoping Review on 8 December 2025 to understand whether it met the criteria for a DHR or DARDR. A recommendation on Case G would be put to the CSP virtually in the new year, as the CSP was not meeting until February 2026.

AGREED:

- (1) That the report and position be noted;**
- (2) That Umi Abdulmutwalib/Sarah Gardner provide a virtual update to the CSP in the new year from the Scoping Review for Case G.**

4. OPCC & PARTNERSHIP FUND UPDATES

Mike Greenway (OPCC) submitted a report and gave a presentation on recent OPCC activity including the Community Fund and Partnership Fund, a Vehicle Crime Campaign and a PCC Video.

He highlighted the 13 November 2025 Government statement about a series of police reforms, one of which was the abolition of the PCCs. The current PCC would serve his term until 1 May 2028 and the PCC role was likely to transfer to regional mayors, or possibly Local Authority-led Policing Boards.

Mike stated that there had been recent work to show the geographical area of the Community Fund and Sarah Gardner could share this.

Sarah Gardner submitted a Partnership Fund Highlight Report, which had been circulated after the main agenda despatch, and gave a presentation summarising the highlight report and listing five proposed future projects in Reading: Commissioning a DHR for A; PSPO implementation costs; strengthening security infrastructure for Reading Refugee Support Group; CSP communications campaigns; and Upskilling CSP Officers. Updates on two of the seven projects were not included in the highlight report and would be included in the next report.

Jo Middlemass reported that the highlight reports would enable CSP to look at the impact of the projects, for accountability, and to focus on where impact was not being made. It was intended to invite partners working on the projects to the CSP to explain their project's impact.

AGREED:

- (1) That the reports and updates be noted;**
- (2) That Sarah Gardner share the recent work on the geographical area of the OPCC Community Fund.**

5. READING PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER (PSPO)

Sarah Gardner gave a presentation on the progress of the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO). The PSPO had been agreed at the Policy Committee on 17 November 2025, and would tackle specific ASB around begging, street drinking, anti-social use of e-bikes and e-scooters, and dog control and fouling. The timetable for implementation was:

- Education Phase - from 5 January 2026
- Publicise Order - by 28 Feb 2026
- Soft Launch of PSPO – aim to go live 2 March 2026
- Full Implementation of PSPO - 24 March 2026

A Project Implementation Board had been set up and would meet on 1 December 2025 to plan the implementation including signage, advertising, communications, resources, and the education/engagement ahead of the launch. A Partnership Fund bid had been drafted for submission to the OPCC to cover the costs of implementation and an update on the Project Implementation Board's plan would be brought to the next CSP. It was also intended that quarterly updates would be submitted to the CSP to monitor progress of use of the PSPO, with the first quarter update planned to come to the September CSP.

AGREED:

- (1) That the position be noted;**
- (2) That an update be given to the next meeting on the Project Implementation Board's plan for the PSPO implementation.**

6. SAFER STREETS UPDATE

In Colin Hudson's absence, Mike Greenway gave a verbal update on Safer Streets, explaining that this was a Home Office initiative through local police forces, providing hotspot patrolling, with a model similar to the Summer Safer Streets campaign, based on information on hotspot and tension areas, street crime and begging. A winter campaign was being prepared and Colin Hudson was putting together a local plan for the West Berks CPU to feed into the overarching plan.

AGREED:

- (1) That the position be noted;**
- (2) That Colin Hudson be asked to provide a written update to the CSP on Safer Streets.**

7. PARTNER UPDATE - YOUNG VOICES

Carly Newman gave an update on recent Young Voices activity, including:

- Work with TVP on "It does matter" material to educate and empower victims to report non-contact sexual offences
- Work with Reading Buses and the Oracle on training for drivers and security guards to be safe trusted adults
- Work with the ASB team on material for the ASB awareness week
- Work with the Fire Service on communications and content for safe community events to celebrate the end of the academic year, the dangers of arson and ways to donate school books
- Work with Nicki Watts on AI
- Partnership work with the Prevent team

The Annual Young Voices Safety Summit had been held in the previous week to link to World Children's Day, with 160 attendees, including young people, professionals, schools and Local Authorities. The summit had looked at real world and online safety and the interplay between the two, looking at what adults needed to know and to ask.

The themes had been informed by responses to the safety survey on the top issues affecting young people and had formed the focus of the day: exploitation, VAWG, bullying and hate crime, and reporting of crime. The summit had involved:

- Space for intergenerational learning
- Stalls from partners for young people to engage with during the day
- Opportunities to attend three or four workshops, including three drama-based and one led by TVP about reporting crime.
- VR head-sets showing the experiences of exploitation of a 13-year old girl, and opportunities for intervention
- A Forum theatre piece about VAWG and opportunities for intervention
- How to define, respond to and navigate bullying and hate crime
- Round table and panel discussions

The event had been very successful, with positive feedback from attendees, with the first review held on 26 November 2025 to collect feedback and learning.

AGREED: That the position be noted and Young Voices be congratulated on the successful Safety Summit.

8. OTHER PARTNER UPDATES

No further updates were given and the Chair made the point that if the partner updates agenda item wasn't going to achieve what was wanted, it needed to be reviewed.

AGREED: That the Partner Update agenda item be reviewed.

9. THAMES VALLEY POLICE STATION MOVE

It was reported that the formal opening of the new police station would be on 9 December 2025, but it would be helpful to have an update from Emma Tompkins. There was some information on the TVP Facebook page, but residents had been asking about how to get there if they needed to go to the police station.

Gail Muirhead reported that the local town centre police teams would have an office base in the Fire Station, without public access.

AGREED: That Jo Middlemass and Sarah Gardner get further details on the police station move and information for the public on how to get to the new station, and work with the RBC media team to be able to field questions and put out information to the public.

10. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meetings for 2025/26 would take place on:

19 February 2026.
16 April 2026

All meetings start at 9.30am, venue to be confirmed.

(The meeting closed at 11.51 am)

Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

10 March 2026



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Roman Britain - Reimagined in Reading
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Emma Gee, Executive Director Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services
Report author	Christelle Beaupoux, Culture and Heritage Projects Manager
Lead Councillor	Cllr Adele Barnett-Ward, Lead Councillor for Leisure & Culture
Council priority	All
Recommendations	<p>That the committee</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notes the £714,785 National Lottery Heritage Fund delivery grant and the commencement of delivery activities, including procurement and recruitment. 2. Grants spend approval and notes the use of £236,808.50 match funding. 3. Notes the project governance and reporting process.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The *Roman Britain - Reimagined in Reading* project has secured a £714,785 delivery grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, following two years of intensive work by the project team and successful completion of all three competitive application stages.
- 1.2. This transformational investment unlocks significant match funding of £236,808 that will enable Reading Museum, through the redevelopment of its Roman Gallery, to care for and improve access to its nationally important Roman collection from the town of Calleva Atrebatum at Silchester and to provide an activity programme for a wide range of audiences.
- 1.3. The project will transform Reading Museum's outdated Silchester Gallery into the new Discovering Calleva Gallery, redisplaying its nationally significant Iron Age and Roman collections in an accessible, engaging and inclusive way. The redevelopment draws on 30 years of University of Reading research and extensive community consultation to deliver updated, accessible interpretation.
- 1.4. The project's objectives are to enhance collection care and environmental sustainability, embed cocreation with priority audiences, deliver a comprehensive four strand activity programme, and strengthen organisational resilience. The strands: Telling the Story, Animating the Gallery, Creative Calleva, and Engaging Schools, will widen participation, support skills development and deepen connections to local Roman heritage.
- 1.5. Key deliverables include a fully redeveloped multisensory gallery with tactile interactives, recreated Roman spaces, 3D printed handling objects, conservation grade cases, low energy lighting, new interpretation and digital resources, and a refreshed

schools programme. The project will also recruit two part time specialist posts, offer two paid internships and create 52 volunteer roles, increasing workforce capacity and community involvement.

- 1.6. Expected outputs include an expanded programme of public events, talks, workshops, community outreach and learning activities, shaped by engagement with disabled people, low income families, young people and Sanctuary Seekers.
- 1.7. The project's outcomes include significantly improved access, inclusion and participation; a more accurate and relatable interpretation of the cultural and ethnic diversity of Roman Calleva; and strengthened organisational sustainability through enhanced environmental conditions, increased footfall, stronger partnerships and improved skills across staff and volunteers. It also supports Reading's net-zero 2030 ambitions and ensures long-term care of the museum's Roman collection.
- 1.8. The Council signed the Grant Acceptance Letter on 9 January 2026, and the award was publicly announced on 27 January 2026. [Reading Museum Secures Heritage Fund Grant to Reimagine Roman Britain for the 21st Century | Reading Borough Council News](#). Officers have now completed the Permission to Start paperwork with The National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project will receive scheme approval as part of the Budget monitoring report presented at Policy Committee on the 16 March 2026.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The project strongly aligns with the priorities and principles of the Council Plan 2025–28 to secure Reading's economic and cultural success by delivering quality cultural services and facilitating exciting improvements to our cultural offer through grant-funded projects.
- 2.2. The project is a strategic priority in the Museum's Forward Plan 2025–2030, endorsed by this Committee in March 2025, recognising the need to replace failing infrastructure, update outdated interpretation and improve access to the Silchester Collection.
- 2.3. The project also delivers key ambitions of Reading's Culture & Heritage Strategy 2015-30, celebrating Reading's unique Roman heritage through a renewed, research led redisplay. It widens participation by embedding inclusive design, creative engagement, volunteering and skills development, while strong partnerships with the University of Reading and local organisations strengthen Reading's cultural infrastructure and support sustainable cultural growth.
- 2.4. In alignment with the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019–2036), the redevelopment adopts a sustainable, low-impact approach within the existing gallery footprint by reducing waste, reusing materials where practicable, and incorporating low-energy systems and conservation-grade display cases that reduce long-term energy demand. This contributes directly to the Council's commitment to achieving net zero carbon by 2030.
- 2.5. At a national level, the project reflects the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Investment Principles, particularly:
 - *Saving heritage* through improved conservation and secure long-term care of nationally significant objects;
 - *Protecting the environment* through low-impact design and more efficient climate control;
 - *Inclusion, access and participation* through co-created interpretation and targeted programming;
 - *Organisational sustainability* through workforce development, volunteer training and strengthened long-term resilience.
- 2.6. Finally, the project reinforces Reading's wider cultural, economic and tourism ambitions, complementing Museums Partnership Reading (Arts Council England funded National Portfolio Organisation) programmes, contributing to a stronger, more visible cultural

offer across the borough, and contributing to the visitor economy and placemaking (REDA's Economic Development Framework).

3. **The Proposal**

- 3.1. The project has secured a £714,785 National Lottery Heritage Fund delivery grant, £236,808.50 from other match-funding sources and a further £28,172 non-cash contribution, making a grand total project budget of £979,765.50. This will enable the commencement of the delivery phase, following successful completion of the project's development stage.
- 3.2. The project will transform Reading Museum's Roman gallery into the new *Discovering Calleva Gallery*, redisplaying Iron Age and Roman objects through immersive, multisensory and accessible interpretation shaped by an extensive community consultation. It will connect more people with Reading's Roman heritage through updated storytelling, tactile interactives, recreated Roman spaces and 3D-printed handling objects. A comprehensive activity programme with four themes: Telling the Story, Animating the Gallery, Creative Calleva and Engaging Schools, will widen participation, strengthen partnerships, expand volunteering and paid placements, and enhance learning opportunities for diverse audiences. Outcomes include improved access, inclusion, skills development and long-term cultural value. For more information about the project, please visit the project's page: [Roman Britain Reimagined in Reading | Reading Museum](#).
- 3.3. To progress the delivery phase, the committee is asked to note the use of £236,808.50 cash in match funding, comprising contributions from project partners and donors including the Earley Charity, Friends of Reading Museum, private donors, and non-cash support, and up to £100,000 from the Council through the Sustainability Fund. Officers are continuing to work on alternative sources of funding to reduce the need for Council match-funding. Furthermore, the Committee is asked to grant Spend Approval for the scheme, this spend approval will allow officers to finalise the remaining financial and contractual arrangements necessary for the project to commence.
- 3.4. Finally, the Committee is asked to note that strong project governance will be maintained through a dedicated project management structure that meets regularly to oversee delivery, budget, risks, and compliance with both National Lottery Heritage Fund requirements and the Council's project management standards. Regular updates will be provided through established Council reporting routes, including HNL Committee reports at key milestones, ensuring robust oversight, transparency, and alignment with organisational priorities.

4. **Contribution to Strategic Aims**

- 4.1. The Council Plan has established five priorities for the years 2025/28. These priorities are:
 - Promote more equal communities in Reading
 - Secure Reading's economic and cultural success
 - Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce our carbon footprint
 - Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children
 - Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future
- 4.2. In delivering these priorities, we will be guided by the following set of principles:
 - Putting residents first
 - Building on strong foundations
 - Recognising, respecting, and nurturing all our diverse communities
 - Involving, collaborating, and empowering residents
 - Being proudly ambitious for Reading
- 4.3. The project strongly aligns with the priorities and principles of the Council Plan 2025–28. By removing long-standing barriers to cultural participation, the project supports the aim of developing fairer communities. Extensive consultation with disabled people,

low-income families, young people and Sanctuary Seekers has shaped a gallery that is multisensory, accessible and relevant, ensuring more residents can benefit from Reading's heritage offer.

- 4.4. The project contributes to securing Reading's economic and cultural success by transforming a key cultural asset into a high-quality, research-led visitor experience. The redevelopment will increase footfall, enhance cultural tourism, strengthen local partnerships and support creative skills, volunteering and community participation.
- 4.5. The project also helps deliver a sustainable and healthy environment. All works occur within the existing gallery footprint, minimising waste and avoiding new construction. The installation of conservation-grade cases, LED lighting and improved environmental controls reduces long-term energy demand, contributing to the Council's commitment to achieving net-zero carbon by 2030. The project will improve the long-term care and management of the museum's nationally important Silchester Collection.
- 4.6. By expanding learning programmes, creative activities, and intergenerational engagement, the redevelopment directly supports the health and wellbeing of adults and children. Finally, the project strengthens organisational resilience, improving skills, digital resources, volunteer capacity, paid internship placements and long-term sustainability, helping to ensure the Council remains fit for the future.
- 4.7. The project embodies the Council's principles by putting residents first, using extensive community consultation and mindful engagement exercises with a wide range of community groups to shape an accessible, multisensory gallery experience. It builds on strong foundations by revitalising a long-established cultural asset with updated interpretation grounded in leading academic research. The project recognises and nurtures Reading's diverse communities by reflecting the cultural diversity of Roman Calleva and today's Reading. Through co-creation, volunteering, partnerships, including the University of Reading's Archaeology Department, Care4Calais, Autism Berkshire, Berkshire Vision, Jelly Arts, New Directions College and the Museums Partnership Reading, each contributing specialist expertise and supporting inclusive consultation activities and targeted outreach, it involves and collaborates with residents. Overall, the project is proudly ambitious for Reading, enhancing its cultural building and strengthening its heritage offer for future generations.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 5.2. The project is aligned with Reading Borough Council's cultural and environmental priorities, delivering a low-impact redevelopment within the existing Silchester Gallery. By avoiding new construction, reusing infrastructure, and upgrading displays and accessibility, it supports the sustainability goals of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019-2036). New conservation-grade cases stabilise microclimates, reducing reliance on whole-gallery HVAC systems, while a cloud-based monitoring system ensures efficient control of environmental conditions. With no transport-intensive works required, the project minimises waste and carbon impact while ensuring the long-term preservation and accessibility of the Silchester collections.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. Extensive meaningful consultation and community engagement were undertaken during the Heritage Fund supported development phase of the project. More than 300 people across Reading contributed through surveys, focus groups, outreach events, interviews and testing sessions. This included 192 online survey responses from visitors to the Silchester Gallery, over 100 participants from 11 community groups such as Berkshire Vision, Care4Calais, Autism Berkshire, British Islamic Gardens and Museum Studies students, and 13 families engaged through Museum on Wheels outreach in Southcote and Whitley libraries, areas of higher deprivation in South Reading. A paid focus group with low-income parents from South Reading provided further insight into barriers and

motivations for visiting museums. Additional consultation included the Museums Partnership Reading Youth Panel, five Museum volunteers, interviews with 11 strategic stakeholders, and feedback from teachers via interviews and an eight-school online survey.

- 6.2. Across all groups, people consistently expressed that the current gallery felt too dark, text-heavy, dated and difficult to navigate. Families, young people and disabled visitors overwhelmingly requested a more immersive, sensory and hands-on experience, wanting smells, sounds, tactile objects, reconstructed spaces and low-tech interactives such as dressing up and mosaic-making. Visually impaired visitors asked for tactile maps, 3D objects, better lighting and audio description. Low-income families highlighted the need for more interactivity and relatable storytelling, while Sanctuary Seekers asked for clear introductions, context, and stories reflecting diversity and migration. Teachers asked for Calleva-focused learning, more handling material, and improved SEND-friendly resources and pre-visit support.
- 6.3. This feedback directly shaped the new Discovering Calleva Gallery proposal: a lighter, more spacious and accessible environment with multisensory elements, tactile and low-tech interactives, 3D printed objects, improved seating, layered interpretation, a stronger focus on diversity and daily life, and a comprehensive activity and schools programme shaped by and co-produced with the communities who helped design it.
- 6.4. The redevelopment is grounded in over 30 years of archaeological research by the University of Reading's Archaeology Department and shaped through meaningful collaboration with Reading's diverse communities to create an inclusive, interactive visitor experience.
- 6.5. This continuous engagement demonstrates that the project has been genuinely shaped with local communities and key partners. The strength of these partnerships and the quality of engagement were praised by the National Lottery Heritage Fund Committee panel. The project team also worked closely with audiences who rely on museum services, including those facing barriers to participation, ensuring that the proposals for the gallery significantly enhance access, inclusion and opportunities for cultural participation across Reading.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -
 - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is not relevant for this decision. The project will deliver enhanced inclusion through:
 - Multisensory interpretation suitable to all, specially developed with the support of neurodivergent visitors and people with visual impairment.
 - Co-created content with under-represented groups.
 - New accessible tours, object handling and informal learning sessions.
 - Proactive outreach through *Museums on Wheels* and community partnerships.
 - Volunteering and paid internship opportunities
 - The gallery will better reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity of Roman Calleva, mirroring the diversity of modern Reading.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1. The Committee is being asked to acknowledge the National Lottery Heritage Fund Delivery Phase grant and authorise the start of delivery activities for the Roman Britain Reimagined in Reading project. The Council has the legal power to do this under the Localism Act 2011 and its constitutional decision-making framework. Committees can delegate actions to officers, enabling decisions to be implemented within approved budgets and policies.
- 8.2. All procurement will follow the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and relevant procurement legislation (including the Procurement Act 2023), ensuring transparency, competition, and value for money. Officers will use the InTend e-tendering portal and frameworks where appropriate.
- 8.3. Grant drawdown depends on The National Lottery Heritage Fund Terms of Grants and requirements, including Permission to Start, ongoing monitoring, reporting, and evaluation.
- 8.4. Legal Services have reviewed and confirmed that the proposed actions and delegations comply with Council powers, the Constitution, and procurement rules.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1. Project budget costs are £951,593.50 and these are met through grant income of £714,785 and match funding of the remainder.
- 9.2. The financial position of the project is strengthened by the significant level of external trust and investment the project has already attracted. The award of a £714,785 National Lottery Fund Delivery Phase grant reinforces strong confidence from a major national funder in both the quality of the project and the Council's capacity to deliver it successfully.
- 9.3. Alongside this national support, the project has secured £236,808.50 in match-funding from external partners, including the Friends of Reading Museum, private donors, the Earley Charity, and valued non-cash volunteer contributions totalling £28,172. The diversity and depth of this funding reflect well-established relationships and demonstrate broad external buy-in across community, charitable, and philanthropic partners.
- 9.4. Together, these contributions mean that almost 90% of project funding comes from outside the Council, significantly reducing the level of direct Council investment required and reinforcing that partners recognise the cultural, social, and community value of the project.
- 9.5. In addition, officers are continuing to develop and implement a fundraising strategy aimed at securing further external contributions as the project progresses. This proactive approach is designed to further reduce the financial pressures on Council budgets, ensuring that any remaining commitments are minimised wherever possible and aligned with the Council's overall financial planning.
- 9.6. The strength of this financial position is further supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund's rigorous financial framework, which requires compliance with detailed grant conditions, ongoing monitoring, milestone-based claims, and clear evidential submissions to ensure accountable use of public money. These assurance processes provide an additional layer of oversight, giving further reassurance that the project will be delivered within robust, transparent, and well-regulated financial controls.
- 9.7. Overall, the combination of substantial national grant funding, diverse partner match-funding, strong oversight mechanisms from the funders and the Council and ongoing fundraising efforts demonstrates a shared support in the project's value. It also provides strong reassurance that the project represents a financially responsible and well-supported investment for the Council, built on trusted external partnerships and sustained community confidence.

10. Timetable for Implementation.

10.1. Project delivery key timeline and milestones from January 2026 to March 2029:

- Spring 2026: Anticipated start of the project
- Summer 2026 and Summer 2027: Recruitment of new staff
- Autumn 2026: Procurement of Interpretation Design Consultants
- Late 2026 to early 2027: Tender procurement of main contractor
- 2027: Gallery works (RIBA stages 5 to 7)
- Spring 2028: Gallery launch
- Spring 2028 to Spring 2029: Delivery of the Activity Plan

11. Background Papers

11.1. None.

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Project / Proposal Name or Reference:		Date:	Your Name:	
Roman Britain Reimagined in Reading Project- Delivery Phase		27-Jan-26	Christelle Beaupoux	
1. IMPACT ON CARBON EMISSIONS				
HOW WILL THIS PROJECT/PROPOSAL AFFECT:	CONSIDERATIONS <i>See guidance below on determining whether negative or positive impacts are High, Medium or Low</i>	IMPACT? <i>Use drop down list</i>	GUIDANCE IF NEGATIVE/NIL RATING HAS BEEN AWARDED	SUMMARISE HOW YOU PLAN TO MANAGE AND REDUCE ANY NEGATIVE IMPACTS
1 ENERGY USE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * More energy will be consumed or emissions generated (by RBC or others) = Negative Impact * No extra energy use is involved or any additional energy use will be met from renewable sources = Nil Impact * Energy use will be reduced or renewable energy sources will replace existing fossil fuel energy = Positive Impact 	Nil	Consider: - Energy efficiency measures - Renewable energy - Reducing demand for energy	The redevelopment will include replacing old lighting with modern, low-carbon LED solutions throughout the Roman gallery.
2 WASTE GENERATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * More waste will be generated (by RBC or others) = Negative Impact * No waste will be generated = Nil Impact * Less waste will be generated OR amount of waste that is reused/ recycled will be increased = Positive Impact 	Low Positive	Consider: - Re-usable/recycled goods - Recycling facilities - Reducing/reusing resources	During the Roman gallery redevelopment, the project will prioritise waste minimisation by reusing existing display cases and structural elements wherever possible, reducing material use and avoiding unnecessary disposal. Robust waste management procedures will include clear segregation of waste, maximised recycling, and responsible disposal of unavoidable waste. These measures complement wider sustainability goals, ensuring updated displays and low impact improvements within the existing gallery footprint.
3 USE OF TRANSPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * RBC or others will need to travel more OR transport goods/people more often/further = Negative Impact * No extra transport will be necessary = Nil Impact * The need to travel, the use of transport and/or of fossil fuel-based transport will be reduced = Positive Impact 	Low Positive	Consider: - Use of public transport - Reducing need to travel or transport goods - Alternative fuels/electric vehicles/walking and cycling	The project involves the redevelopment of an existing gallery within the Museum and Town Hall complex. No new spaces will be constructed. The Museum/Town Hall is centrally located and easily accessible on foot and is well served by public transport, supporting sustainable travel and minimising transport-related environmental impacts.
2. IMPACT ON RESILIENCE TO THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE				
HOW WILL THIS PROJECT/PROPOSAL AFFECT THE ABILITY OF READING TO WITHSTAND:	CONSIDERATIONS <i>See guidance below on determining whether negative or positive impacts are High, Medium or Low</i>	IMPACT? <i>Use drop down list</i>	GUIDANCE IF NEGATIVE/NIL RATING HAS BEEN AWARDED	SUMMARISE HOW YOU PLAN TO MANAGE AND REDUCE ANY NEGATIVE IMPACTS
4 HEATWAVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Increased exposure of vulnerable people and/or infrastructure to heat stress = Negative Impact * No increase in exposure to heat stress = Nil Impact * Reduced exposure of vulnerable people and/or infrastructure to heat stress = Positive Impact 	Nil	Greater need for cooling, ventilation, shading and hydration methods	The installation of new conservation grade environmental display cases and contemporary display materials, will significantly reduce the need for additional cooling systems and lower overall energy demand. These upgrades provide stable microclimates within cases, ensuring efficient environmental control while supporting long term sustainability and improved collections care.
5 DROUGHT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Water use will increase and/or no provision made for water management = Negative Impact * Levels of water use will not be changed = Nil Impact * Provision made for water management, water resources will be protected = Positive Impact 	Nil	Greater need for water management and perhaps reserve supplies	The project has minimal drought impact due to its refurbishment-based approach, which avoids water-intensive construction and prioritises reuse of existing infrastructure. Modern conservation-grade display cases and digital monitoring reduce reliance on HVAC processes that indirectly use water.
6 FLOODING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Levels of surface water run-off will increase, no management of flood risk = Negative Impact * Levels of surface water run-off & flood risk are not affected = Nil Impact * Sustainable drainage measures incorporated, positive steps to reduce & manage flood risk = Positive Impact 	Nil	Consider flood defence mechanisms or alternative arrangements (business continuity)	This project involves internal redevelopment only and will not affect the building's roof, structure, or external openings. However, a separate parallel project is addressing essential repairs to the Museum/Town Hall roof. Once completed, these works will significantly strengthen the building's resilience to water ingress and improve its overall protection against flooding.
7 HIGH WINDS / STORMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Exposure to higher wind speeds is increased or is not managed = Negative Impact * No change to existing level of exposure to higher wind speeds = Nil Impact * Exposure to higher wind speeds is being actively managed & reduced = Positive Impact 	Nil	Greater need for stabilisation measures, robust structures resilient to high winds	Although not part of this gallery redevelopment, the internal redevelopment will not affect the Museum/Town Hall's external structure. However, a parallel project is reinforcing key structural elements and the roof of the whole building. Although separate from the gallery refurbishment, this work will significantly improve the building's long-term structural performance and its ability to withstand increasingly severe weather conditions.
8 DISRUPTION TO SUPPLY CHAINS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Exposure to supply chain disruption for key goods and services is increased = Negative Impact * No change in exposure to supply chain disruption for key goods and services = Nil Impact * Exposure to supply chain disruption for key goods and services is reduced = Positive Impact 	Low Negative	Source key goods and services locally as it reduces exposure to supply chain disruption and boosts the local economy	The project team will seek to appoint local contractors and procure materials from local suppliers wherever feasible, supporting reduced transport-related carbon emissions and contributing to the local economy. However, due to the specialist skills required for museum-grade conservation work and the need for specific products not always available locally, some procurement may need to be sourced from outside the region. This requirement is further influenced by ongoing supply-chain disruptions affecting the UK and
		Net Low Positive		

Weighing up the negative and positive impacts of your project, what is the overall rating you are assigning to your project?:

This overall rating is what you need to include in your report/ budget proposal, together with your explanation given below.

Guidance on Assessing the Degree of Negative and Positive Impacts:

Note: Not all of the considerations/ criteria listed below will necessarily be relevant to your project

Low Impact (L)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * No publicity * Relevant risks to the Council or community are Low or none * No impact on service or corporate performance
Medium Impact (M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * No impact on capital assets; or relates to minor capital assets (minor works) * Local publicity (good or bad) * Relevant risks to the Council or community are Medium * Affects delivery of corporate commitments * Affects service performance (e.g.: energy use; waste generation, transport use) by more than c.10%
High Impact (H)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Relates to medium-sized capital assets (individual buildings or small projects) * National publicity (good or bad) * Relevant risks to the Council or community are Significant or High * Affects delivery of regulatory commitments * Affects corporate performance (e.g.: energy; waste; transport use) by more than c.10% * Relates to major capital assets (larger buildings and infrastructure projects)

In the box below please summarise any relevant policy context, explain how the overall rating has been derived, highlight significant impacts (positive and negative) and explain actions being taken to mitigate negatives and increase positives. This text can be replicated in the 'Environment and Climate Impacts' section of your Committee Report, though

The Roman Britain-Reimagined in Reading project, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and aligned with Reading Borough Council's cultural and environmental priorities, delivers a low-impact redevelopment within the existing Silchester Gallery. By avoiding new construction, reusing infrastructure, and upgrading displays and accessibility, it supports the sustainability goals of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019-2036). New conservation-grade cases stabilise microclimates, reducing reliance on whole-gallery HVAC systems, while a cloud-based monitoring system ensures efficient control of environmental conditions. With no transport-intensive works required, the project minimises waste and carbon impact while ensuring the long term preservation and accessibility of the Silchester collections.

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Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

10 March 2026



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Allotments - Fees & Charges Consultation
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Emma Gee, Executive Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services
Report author	Graeme Rasdall-Lawes, Neighbourhood Services Manager
Lead Councillor	Councillor Karen Rowland, Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety
Council priority	Deliver a sustainable & healthy environment & reduce Reading's carbon footprint
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Committee note the findings of the 2025 Allotment Survey, as summarised in Section 3 and detailed in Appendix 1. 2. That the Committee approve the proposed Allotment Fees Pricing Structure set out in Section 3.29, to be implemented from April 2027 following the statutory 12-month notice period.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report informs the Committee of the findings from the allotment fee consultation with plot holders, as outlined in Section 3 and detailed in Appendix 1. The consultation reflects a highly engaged community, with concerns about affordability balanced by acknowledgement that the service must move towards financial sustainability.
- 1.2 The report also seeks approval of the proposed allotment fees pricing structure set out in Section 3.29, designed to secure the long-term viability of the service while maintaining fairness through the continued use of concessionary discounts.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 The Council's approved Corporate Plan sets out its priorities for Reading and provides strategic direction for staff in delivering services that meet the needs of communities across the Borough, while operating within the agreed budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- 2.2 The Allotment Service must ensure the most effective use of resources in delivering a high-quality, best-value public service, supporting the Council's aim of maintaining sustainable finances over the medium and longer term.
- 2.3 Reading Borough Council administers 20 allotment sites across the Borough, comprising more than 1,600 worked plots across 41.5 hectares of land.
- 2.4 Under Section 23 of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908, the Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient allotments for residents who wish to cultivate and harvest produce.

2.5 This proposal seeks to deliver a balanced and affordable budget that supports the long-term sustainability of the Council’s finances. The Council’s Vision underpins the Strategy: “to ensure that Reading realises its potential and that everyone who lives and works in Reading can share in the benefits of its success”.

2.6 In the context of the declared climate emergency and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, allotments remain an important, cost-effective, local and sustainable food source for residents, and their continued provision and use should be supported.

3. The Proposal

Background

3.1 The Council manages 20 allotment sites across the Borough, comprising more than 1,600 worked plots over 41.5 hectares of land. Half of these are Statutory sites and therefore benefit from a degree of protection under the Allotments Act 1925. The remaining ‘Temporary’ sites have no long-term security beyond the requirements of the planning system.

3.2 Section 10(1) of the Allotments Act 1950 establishes two key principles:

- Councils must set rents that reflect what a tenant might reasonably be expected to pay for comparable land used in a similar way.
- Councils may charge a lower rent where justified by individual circumstances, such as financial hardship or disability.

The legislation places no obligation on councils to subsidise allotments.

3.3 In recent years, the Council has streamlined the allotment fee structure and applied incremental fee increases. These changes were reported to the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee (6 July 2023) and the Policy Committee (11 March 2024). Twelve months’ notice was issued to implement the revised fees from April 2025. Despite these adjustments, a significant subsidy from Council taxpayers remains necessary.

3.4 For the financial year ending 31 March 2026, allotment rental income was projected at approximately £66,193, against an estimated annual service cost of £167,598.

3.5 For the 2026/27 financial year, allotment fees will increase by 3.25% in line with inflation.

The table below sets out the 2025/26 rent matrix for plots of 125sqm

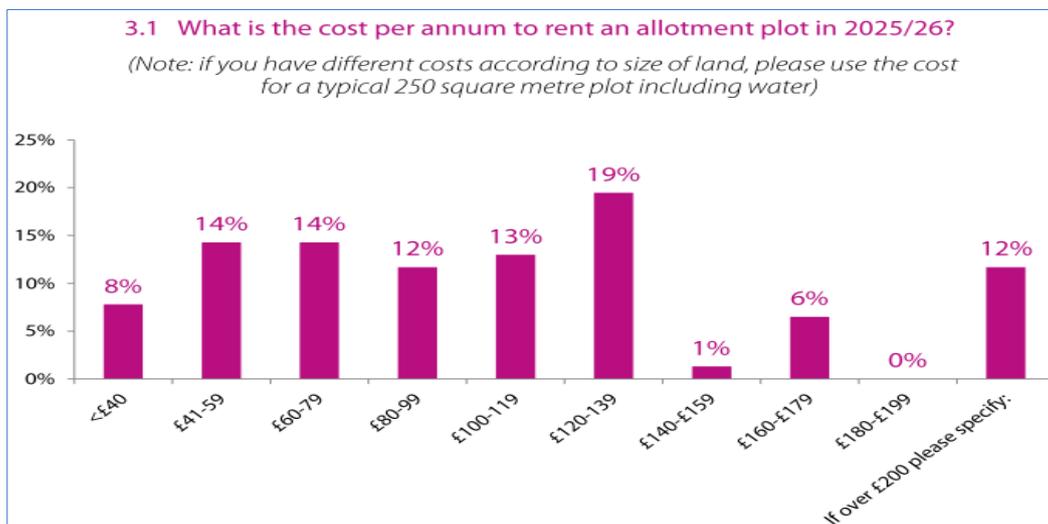
Site Category	Full Fee	40% Discounted Rate
A Water supply across site	£54/year £1.04/week	£32.50/year £0.63/week
B Water supplied on site but may be a distance from the plot	£39.00/year £0.75/week	£23.50/year £0.45/week
C No water supply	£27/year £0.52/week	£16.50/year £0.32week

APSE State of the Market Commentary

3.6 Each year, the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) conducts a survey of local authority allotment services, providing insight into sector trends, operational

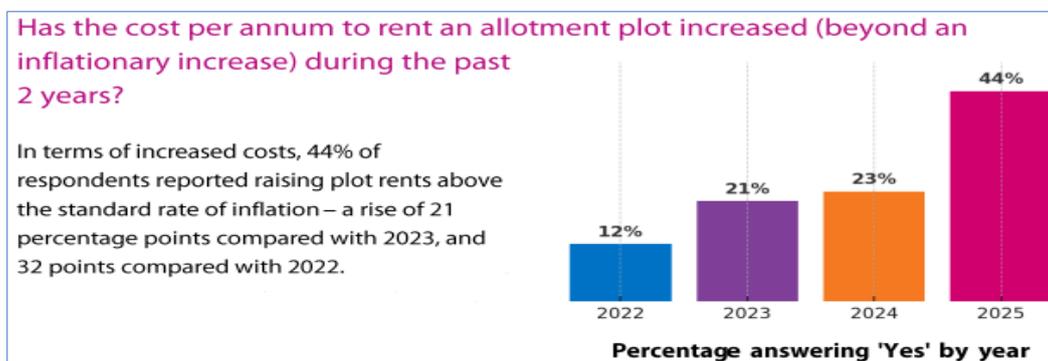
challenges and emerging best practice (Appendix 2). The 2025 survey, undertaken between June and August, highlights the increasing financial pressures faced by councils and the range of strategies being adopted nationally to improve cost recovery and long-term service sustainability.

- 3.7 48% reported that they charge less than £100 p.a. in rent for a 250m² plot (inc water). 19% charge over £140 with the bulk of those councils located in urban areas.



- 3.8 Over 63% of councils reported that they continue to subsidise allotment services, despite efforts to move towards full cost recovery. A further 56% indicated that they had not increased annual charges beyond inflation during the past two years. Among those authorities that had applied increases above inflation, 65% still reported that their allotment service remained subsidised.

- 3.9 44% of respondents reported raising plot rents above the standard rate of inflation. The overall trend suggests a sector-wide move towards reducing subsidies and, where possible, achieving at least cost-neutral provision.



- 3.10 Nearly half of responding authorities reported plans to introduce further incremental rent increases over the next two years, reflecting the ongoing financial pressures facing local government and the need to align charges with budgetary requirements.
- 3.11 Concessionary discounts remain widely available, with 60% of councils maintaining reduced rates for eligible groups. However, several authorities indicated that these schemes are under review to ensure long-term financial sustainability.
- 3.12 In addition, 42% of councils have introduced or expanded charges for ancillary services, including water supply and site improvements.
- 3.13 Taken together, these findings highlight the continuing challenge for local authorities in balancing affordability for residents with the need to ensure the financial viability of allotment services.

Allotment Survey – Winter 2025

3.14 The consultation sought responses from all plot holders, the questionnaire covered the following categories:

- Allotment usage
- Fees and the impact on plot holders
- Policy opinions
- Allotment benefits
- Management preferences

The consultation and implementation timeline for the revised fee schedule is set out in the table below.

7 th November 2025	Start 6-week consultation phase.
19 th December 2025	Conclusion of 6-week consultation.
22 nd December 2025	Analysis and weighing up commences.
16 th January 2026	Outcomes and proposals for final preferred rent/discount model are collated.
10 th March 2026	Report provided to HNL advising of consultation outcome and proposal.
Prior to 1 st April 2026	The Council gives all tenants 12 months written notice of changes to rent.
1 st April 2027	New rents and discounts can be implemented.

3.15 A total of 226 individuals participated in the consultation, either through the online survey or by completing a paper version. Responses were received from all 20 allotment sites across the Borough, ensuring broad and comprehensive representation. Throughout the consultation period, participants were supported by site representatives and the Allotments Team, who were available to facilitate engagement and respond to any queries.

3.16 65.5% of respondents have held a plot for 4+ years (38.5% for 10+ years), and usage is very frequent: 95.6% visit weekly or more (55.8% several times a week, 32.7% weekly, 7.1% daily). This indicates a mature, committed community with strong utilisation of sites.

3.17 A consultation on proposed changes to allotment rents and concessions was undertaken between 7 November to the 19 December, with 226 responses received from plot holders across all 20 allotment sites. This represents strong engagement from a well-established and active allotment community. The full survey results, including detailed data tables and analysis, are provided in Appendix 1.

Views on Rent Increases and Affordability

3.18 Feedback on the proposed rent increases was mixed, with respondents evenly split between supporting and opposing an increase, with a significant proportion unsure, 39.4% Agreed, 38.9% Disagreed and 21.7% were unsure, as shown in Appendix 1 (Section B). Affordability concerns were a recurring theme, particularly for those on low or fixed incomes. However, many respondents also acknowledged the need for the service to be financially sustainable and less reliant on Council subsidy.

- 3.19 A majority indicated they were unlikely to give up their plot if the increases were implemented, though around a quarter said they might be forced to do so. This highlights the importance of maintaining concessionary support for vulnerable groups.

Concessions, Plot Policy and Site Management

- 3.20 Support for retaining the 40% concessionary discount was strong (68.6%), with most respondents viewing it as appropriate (Appendix 1, Section B). 61.9% of respondents also supported limiting concessionary rates to one plot per household. Views on broader plot allocation policies such as limiting households to one plot or encouraging smaller plots to reduce waiting lists were more divided, indicating no clear consensus.

Perceived Benefits of Allotments

- 3.21 Respondents identified a wide range of benefits associated with allotment use, including physical and mental wellbeing, access to fresh produce, community cohesion, biodiversity, and opportunities for learning (Appendix 1, Section B). Nearly 91% rated their allotment as important or very important to their wellbeing, reinforcing the wider social and environmental value of allotments beyond their financial cost.

Alternative Approaches Suggested

- 3.22 A substantial number of respondents proposed alternatives to a significant rent increase (Appendix 1, Section B). Common suggestions included improving plot occupancy and enforcement, reducing water costs, expanding self-management, increasing transparency on service costs, and exploring grants or sponsorship. Officers will assess how these measures, whether implemented individually or in combination, can potentially be applied to minimise the impact on future plot holder's fees.

Conclusions and Overall Analysis

- 3.23 The consultation highlights a community that is both deeply invested in its allotments and concerned about the impact of rising costs. Many respondents expressed understandable worries about affordability and favoured phased or modest increases. However, the feedback also shows clear recognition that the allotment service must be financially sustainable and cannot continue to rely on ongoing Council subsidy. Several respondents noted that, even with a significant increase, allotments remain comparatively good value when set against other leisure activities, and that more realistic rents could help improve plot turnover and reduce waiting lists.
- 3.24 Since the consultation began, the Allotments Team has observed a marked rise in applications for concessionary discounts. This trend reinforces the importance of maintaining a robust concession system to protect vulnerable groups and ensure continued access for residents on low or fixed incomes.
- 3.25 Alternative approaches were considered, including applying annual inflationary increases in line with CPI. While this option would have been more popular with many plot holders and avoided a single sharp rise, it would not address the existing structural subsidy within the service. Incremental inflation-only adjustments would prolong the financial deficit, restrict investment in site maintenance and improvements, and delay progress towards the Council's objective of reducing reliance on subsidy.
- 3.26 The proposed increase is therefore intended to ensure the long-term sustainability of the allotment service and maintain its ability to deliver essential benefits for residents. It provides a clear and proportionate correction to the current funding imbalance, while retaining the 40% concessionary discount to ensure support remains targeted at those most in need, including pensioners, people with disabilities, and those in receipt of benefits.

3.27 Taken together, the survey findings and financial analysis demonstrate the need for a balanced approach that secures the future of the service, protects vulnerable households, and maintains the health, wellbeing and environmental benefits that allotments provide for the Borough.

Proposed fee charges for financial year 2027/28

3.28 The table below sets out the proposed rent matrix for plots of 125sqm from April 2027.

Site Category	Full Fee	40% Discounted Rate
A Water supply across site	£111.50/year £2.14/week	£67/year £1.29/week
B Water supplied on site but may be a distance from the plot	£80.50/year £1.55/week	£48.50/year £0.93/week
C No water supply	£56.00/year £1.08/week	£34/year £0.65week

3.29 The survey and detailed analysis are shown in Appendix 1.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

4.1 The Allotment services contribute to the Council's 2025-2028 Council Plan themes around:

- **Promote more equal communities in Reading** – The allotment fees pricing structure supports fairness and inclusion by maintaining concessionary discounts while ensuring the long-term viability of the service. This approach helps keep allotments accessible to residents on lower incomes and promotes more equal participation across the borough.
- **Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce Reading's carbon footprint** – By effective management of allotment sites including improved maintenance, responsible waste management, and enhanced biodiversity supports the borough's environmental goals and contributes to Reading's net zero ambitions. Allotments also provide residents with a local, low carbon, and cost-effective source of fresh food, reducing reliance on commercially transported produce.
- **Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children** – the allotments play a vital role in supporting the health and wellbeing of adults and children by providing access to green spaces for physical activity and stress relief, opportunities to grow fresh produce for healthier diets, and fostering social inclusion and intergenerational engagement. Allotments also provide educational opportunities for children, helping to build environmental awareness and lifelong healthy habits.
- **Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future** – reducing the current subsidy for the allotment service strengthens financial sustainability and resilience in line with the Council's Financial Strategy. A more balanced funding model ensures the service can continue to operate effectively while reducing pressure on the Council's wider budget.

4.2 This decision will help improve the quality of life for Reading residents by ensuring that allotments remain a well-managed and sustainable resource for the future. By generating income to maintain sites, address waste issues and enhance biodiversity, the service contributes to a cleaner, greener town and supports the Borough's climate commitments.

- 4.3 Allotments provide valuable access to outdoor space for exercise, relaxation and the growing of fresh food, offering recognised physical and mental health benefits for adults and children. They also create opportunities for learning about nature, food production and healthy eating, with positive impacts that can last throughout life.
- 4.4 Keeping the service financially sustainable enables the Council to continue providing allotments without relying heavily on subsidies, thereby freeing up resources for other priority services. Retaining discounts for residents on low incomes ensures that allotments remain accessible to all, helping to reduce inequality and support fairer, more inclusive communities. Allotments also contribute to Reading's cultural and social fabric by bringing people together, fostering community cohesion and supporting long-standing local traditions.
- 4.5 The introduction of Abavus software in 2026 will significantly enhance the organisation and administration of allotments. The system will give plot holders direct access to their accounts, enabling streamlined communication, simplified invoicing and real-time updates on plot status. This move represents a major step forward in modernising processes and improving operational efficiency, delivering a better experience for both plot holders and service administrators.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1 The proposals have no direct or immediate sustainable development impacts. However, the Survey provides an important starting point for the development of future waste-minimisation and environmentally focused policies. It is anticipated that this work will extend beyond waste-related issues to include measures on water conservation, herbicide and pesticide use, the management of bonfires, and actions to enhance biodiversity across allotment sites.

6. Community Engagement and Information

- 6.1 The Allotment Survey on rents and discounts was not a statutory requirement, but it was considered good practice and an important opportunity to ensure plot holders were fully informed about the challenges of running an allotment service during a period of significant financial constraint. The volume and breadth of feedback received has been central to shaping the proposals set out in this paper.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1 The survey was primarily conducted online and via email, with hard-copy forms provided for those without digital access. Site volunteers distributed additional paper forms to fellow plot holders and supported individuals who required assistance in completing them. While the proposals set out in this report may impact low-income households, there is no evidence of differential impact on people with any specific protected characteristic. The survey did not include questions relating to protected characteristics.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1 There are no other relevant issues to report.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1 Rights and responsibilities relating to the provision of allotments are defined in the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908.
- 9.2 The provision of allotments is a statutory service. Under Section 23 of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908, councils have a duty to provide a sufficient number of allotments for residents who wish to cultivate and harvest produce.
- 9.3 The Allotments Act 1922 introduced security of tenure for plot holders, ensuring they cannot be easily evicted and establishing minimum notice periods and compensation arrangements for tenants.

- 9.4 Section 10(1) of the Allotments Act 1950 sets out two key principles for rent setting:
- rents must reflect what a tenant might reasonably be expected to pay for comparable land used in a similar way; and
 - councils may charge a lower rent were justified by individual circumstances, such as financial hardship or disability.
- 9.5 Relevant case law provides further guidance on rent setting. The High Court has confirmed that councils are under no obligation to subsidise allotments and that rent increases are lawful where they are proportionate and reasonable, including where they are intended to recover a greater share of service costs. Case law also establishes the requirement to give tenants at least 12 months' notice of any proposed rent increase and emphasises the importance of consultation, including early and ongoing engagement with tenants.
- 9.6 Collectively, these legislative provisions ensure that councils meet their responsibilities to provide allotments while safeguarding the rights and protections afforded to tenant.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1 The financial implications arising from the proposals set out in this report are set out below:

This table sets out the revenue implications:

Running Costs	2025/6	2026/7	2027/8
	£000	£000	£000
Expenditure	£168,000	£173,460	£179,100
Income from: fees and charges	-£67,000	-£69,177	-£132,000
Total income	-£67,000	-£69,177	-£132,000
Net Cost (+) /Saving (-)	£101,000	£104,280	£47,100

NOTE: Inflation of 3.25% has been applied to the running costs for 2026/7 and 2027/8

11. Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1 The Council is required to give plot holders 12 months' written notice of any changes to the rent and discount structure. To introduce the new rent levels from 1st of April 2027, the decision to increase rents must be taken and communicated to plot holders by no later than 31st of March 2026.

12. Background Papers

- 12.1 There are none.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Allotment Survey

Appendix 2 - Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) survey

APPENDIX 1 – ALLOTMENT SURVEY

Plot holder opinion was sought through November and December 2025

- 226 (16% of plotholders) participated in the consultation, either through the online survey or by completing a paper version. Responses were received from all 20 allotment sites across the borough, ensuring comprehensive representation. Participants were offered support from site representatives and allotment team staff throughout the process to facilitate engagement and address any queries
- This response rate is a testament to Site Liaison Representatives (SLRs) who broadcast the survey via their own on-site efforts.
- The survey asked for opinions on:
 - Allotment usage
 - Fees and the impact of plot holders
 - Policy opinions
 - Allotment benefits
 - Management preferences
 -

Responses were broadly representative in that all sites provided feedback.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

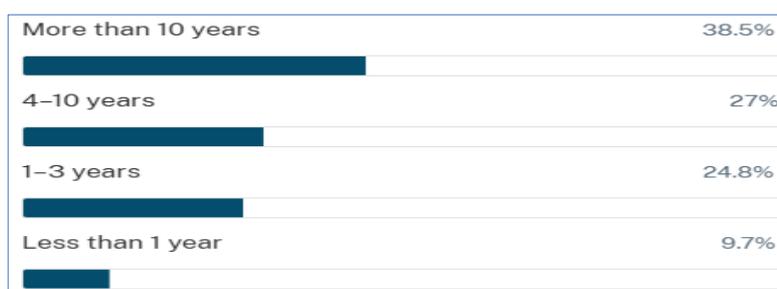
Section A

Data Gathering - Allotment Usage

ANALYSIS.

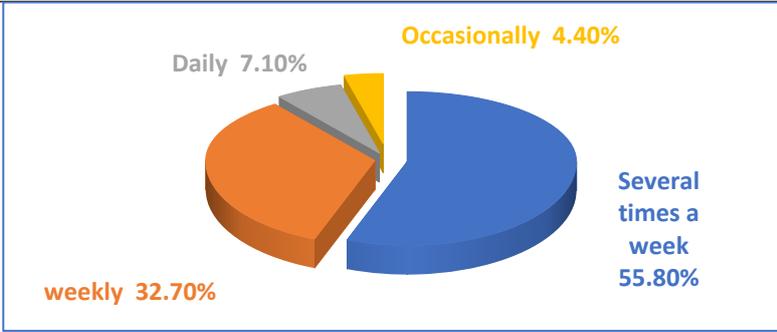
The survey results demonstrate a well-established and highly committed allotment community. A significant proportion of respondents 38.5% have held their plots for more than ten years, indicating long-term stability and deep-rooted engagement with their sites. A further 27% have been tenants for between four and ten years, and 24.8% for one to three years, showing a healthy mix of longstanding and newer plot holders. Only 9.7% have held a plot for less than a year, suggesting low turnover and strong continuity across the service.

Tenancy Length



Frequency of Use

Patterns of site use reinforce this picture of commitment. Seven per cent of respondents use their plots daily, while a further 55.8% visit several times a week. An additional 32.7% attend weekly, with only 4.4% describing their use as occasional. This high frequency of attendance demonstrates that plots are actively cultivated and valued as part of residents' weekly routines.



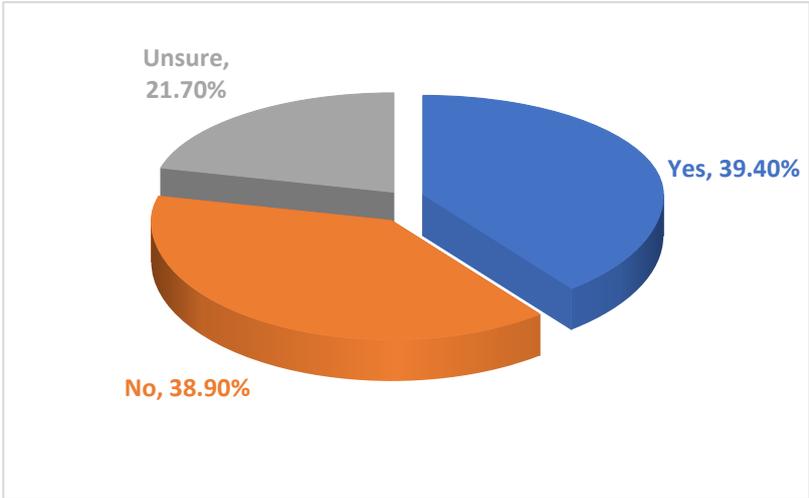
Taken together, these findings indicate a mature, stable and highly engaged allotment community, with strong utilisation of sites and a clear commitment from plot holders to maintaining and making full use of their allotments.

Section B

Fee increases and affordability	AGREE	DISAGREE	UNSURE
Of those that expressed an opinion	39.4%	38.9%	21.7%

ANALYSIS.

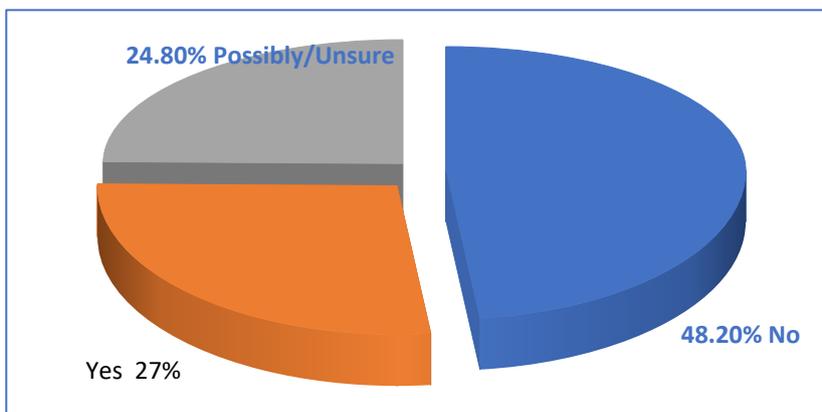
Views on raising rents to cover service costs are evenly balanced but divergent, with 39.4% in favour, 38.9% opposed, and 21.7% unsure. When asked how a rent increase would affect their ability to keep a plot, 38.1% said they would find it difficult but would try to continue, 36.7% felt they could continue as normal, and 19% indicated they might have to give up their plot.



When asked directly about the likelihood of giving up their plot if the increase were implemented, a majority (56.7%) said they were not likely to do so (31% unlikely, 25.7% not at all likely). A smaller proportion (27.9%) said they were likely or very likely to give up their plot, while 15.5% were unsure.

Unlikely	31%
Not at all likely	25.7%
Somewhat likely	17.3%
Not sure	15.5%
Very likely	10.6%

Nearly half of respondents (48.2%) said a rent increase would not create specific challenges in maintaining their plot. However, 27% said it would, and 24.8% were unsure. Among those who anticipated challenges, affordability particularly for those on low or fixed incomes was the most frequently cited concern.



Most respondents (59.7%) said they would not reduce their plot size to lower costs, and a further 22.6% said this was not applicable because they already held a small plot.

Concessions, Plot Policy and Site Management

Support for retaining the 40% concessionary discount is strong, with 68.6% saying the current level is “about right.” Smaller proportions felt the discount was too high (14.6%) or too low (6.6%).

A clear majority (61.9%) agreed that concessionary rates should be limited to one plot per household. Views on limiting households to a single plot more generally were mixed: 42% in favour, 37.2% opposed, and 20.8% unsure.

Opinions were similarly divided on encouraging smaller plots to reduce waiting lists (39.4% yes, 38.1% no, 22.6% unsure).

Perceived Benefits of Allotments

Respondents highlighted a wide range of benefits derived from their allotments, demonstrating the social, environmental and personal value of the service beyond revenue considerations.

These included:

- sharing produce and supporting charities
- education and learning for adults and children

- affordability and access to organic produce
- financial savings
- wildlife observation and biodiversity
- beekeeping
- multicultural participation
- reducing chemical intake

Most respondents consider their allotment highly important to their wellbeing, with 69.9% rating it “very important” and a further 21.2% rating it “important.” This underscores the strong role allotments play in health, lifestyle and community cohesion.

Self-Management and Local Control

Views on greater self-management through allotment associations were mixed.

- 35.8% would support and actively participate
- 27.4% would support but not participate
- 16.4% oppose
- 20.4% are unsure

This indicates moderate interest in increased local control, but not a clear mandate.

Alternative Approaches Suggested by Respondents

Respondents proposed a wide range of alternatives to avoid a significant rent increase. The strongest themes included:

- improving plot occupancy and reducing the number of abandoned or underused plots
- reducing water costs through efficiency measures
- expanding self-management to reduce council overheads
- greater transparency on current service costs
- phased or modest fee increases rather than sudden rises
- improved waste management, including composting
- exploring grants, sponsorship, fundraising and selling surplus produce or compost
- using community skills for maintenance

Several respondents argued that allotments should be subsidised as a public good due to their health, social and environmental benefits.

Overall, respondents favoured cost-saving measures and alternative income streams over steep fee increases.

General Comments and Concerns

Many respondents expressed strong opposition to the proposed rent increase, citing affordability concerns particularly for those on low or fixed incomes and frustration with perceived poor site maintenance and limited council investment.

Common themes included:

- dissatisfaction with abandoned plots not being reallocated promptly
- calls for stricter enforcement of tenancy agreements
- demands for greater transparency on how fees are calculated and spent
- concerns about security and site conditions
- requests for smaller plot options
- calls for improved communication
- preference for phased or modest increases rather than sudden hikes

While a minority supported the increase particularly if concessions were better targeted the

overall sentiment was clear: respondents opposed large fee rises without corresponding improvements in service quality, management and transparency.

Specific Comments in Favour of an Increase

A small number of respondents supported higher fees, often framing allotments as a valuable hobby and emphasising fairness in cost recovery. Themes included:

- allotments remain good value even with substantial increases
- the service should not rely on council subsidies
- higher rents could discourage inactive tenants and reduce waiting lists
- concessions should be targeted more precisely, particularly to those on Pension Credit

Even among supporters, there was concern for vulnerable groups and a desire to retain concessions for those on low incomes.

Specific Comments Against an Increase

Most respondents who commented were strongly opposed to a significant increase. Key concerns included:

- affordability and the risk of plot abandonment
- potential loss of community cohesion
- the essential role of allotments in food security, wellbeing and social connection
- the belief that allotments should not be expected to be revenue-neutral
- the view that steep increases would disproportionately affect low-income households
- calls for phased increases and alternative funding options

Many respondents stressed that allotments are a vital community asset that should be preserved and remain accessible.

Other Options Considered but Not Recommended

1. Inflationary Increase Only

Applying an annual inflationary increase in line with CPI would maintain gradual adjustments and avoid sharp rises but would not address the significant gap between income and service costs.

2. Incremental Increase

Implementing a smaller increase (e.g., 25% or 50%) phased over one or two years was considered but would still fall short of achieving the required level of cost recovery.

Conclusion

The consultation demonstrates a wide range of views on the proposed rent increase, with many respondents expressing understandable concerns about affordability and calling for phased or more modest rises. At the same time, a significant proportion recognised that allotment services must be financially sustainable and cannot continue to rely on ongoing Council subsidy. Several respondents also noted that, even with a substantial increase, allotments would remain comparatively low-cost and good value relative to other leisure activities, and that realistic rents could help improve plot turnover and reduce waiting lists.

Since the consultation began, the Allotments Team has seen a marked rise in applications for concessionary discounts. This reinforces the importance of retaining the 40% concessionary rate to protect residents on low or fixed incomes and ensure that those most in need continue to have access to allotments.

The proposed increase is intended to address the significant structural deficit within the service and secure its long-term sustainability. Alternative approaches such as limiting increases to inflation or applying smaller incremental rises were carefully considered but discounted. These options would not correct the current funding gap and would require repeated annual increases, creating prolonged uncertainty for plot holders and delaying essential investment in site maintenance, waste management and biodiversity improvements. They would also perpetuate reliance on Council subsidy, contrary to the Council's Financial Strategy.

By contrast, a single, clearly communicated adjustment provides stability and transparency, enabling the service to plan effectively and maintain the environmental, health and wellbeing benefits that allotments deliver for residents. Even after the proposed increase, allotment rents remain low in absolute terms approximately £2.14 per week and compare favourably with other leisure and wellbeing activities accessed by similar demographic groups.

Retaining the 40% concessionary discount ensures that the increase remains fair and inclusive, safeguarding access for those who may be most affected by rising costs.

Overall, the evidence indicates that allotment fees in Reading remain materially out of line with the true cost of provision and with comparable leisure charges. The proposed increase from April 2027, following the statutory 12-month notice period, represents a necessary and proportionate step to reduce the funding imbalance, protect vulnerable groups, and secure the long-term sustainability of the service.

Taken together, the proposal reflects a balanced and evidence-based response to the consultation. It maintains the health, wellbeing and environmental benefits of allotments for residents while ensuring that the service is financially responsible, resilient and fit for the future.

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association for public service excellence

Local Authority State of the Market 2025

Allotment Services



Briefing 25/21
August 2025

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Local Authority State of the Market 2025: Allotment Services

This analysis was conducted by Matt Ellis, APSE Principal Advisor for Parks.

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Results at a glance

(Change from 2024)

Cost

Charge less than £100 per annum to rent a 250 sq m plot (inc. water) for 2025/26	48%	Data change
Do not recover costs from managing the allotments and therefore subsidise the service	63%	-7%
Not increased the cost per annum to rent a plot during the past 2 years (beyond an inflationary increase)	56%	-21%
If the price has increased beyond inflation, the allotments service is still subsidised	65%	+7%

Number of sites

More than 20 allotment sites in the authority	51%	-2%
Plan to increase the number of allotments	35%	-18%

Waiting lists

Average waiting time of more than 18 months	63%	-4%
Contain more than 1000 people	31%	+2%

Plot size / ownership

Have reduced the size of standard plots to create smaller-sized plots	76%	+3%
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Concessions

Offer concessionary / discount prices	60%	-6%
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Biodiversity

Areas being set aside for wildlife	80%	+5%
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1 Purpose of the report

Each year APSE undertakes a survey on the state of the market in local authority allotment services. The survey is distributed to officers and elected members across the UK and includes a series of questions covering a diverse range of topics – from cost and waiting lists to amenities and strategies.

Where possible, this report adopts a comparative analysis with previous APSE state of the market surveys. This allows for the identification of trends in the sector, as well as the challenges, opportunities and issues that local authority parks and greenspace teams are facing. The results of the survey are shared with local authorities and other organisations to help them better understand the needs of the sector.

In recent years, the findings of APSE's local authority allotment surveys have attracted national headlines, featuring in BBC Breakfast (2022)¹, The Times (2023)², Gardeners' World Magazine (2024)³, and HortWeek (2024).⁴

1.1 Methodology

APSE conducted a survey of its member local councils between June and August 2025.

Respondents were relatively evenly spread across APSE's six areas of activity: APSE Scotland, APSE Wales, APSE Northern Ireland, APSE Northern, APSE Southern and APSE Central.

1.2 Allotment authorities

While some allotments are provided by private individuals, charities or trustees, the majority are provided by local authorities. All allotment authorities have power to provide allotments. They also have a duty to do so if there is a sufficient demand for allotments (section 23, Allotments Act 1908).⁵

¹ <http://www.apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/news/articles/2022/the-pressure-on-plots-apse-on-bbc-breakfast/>

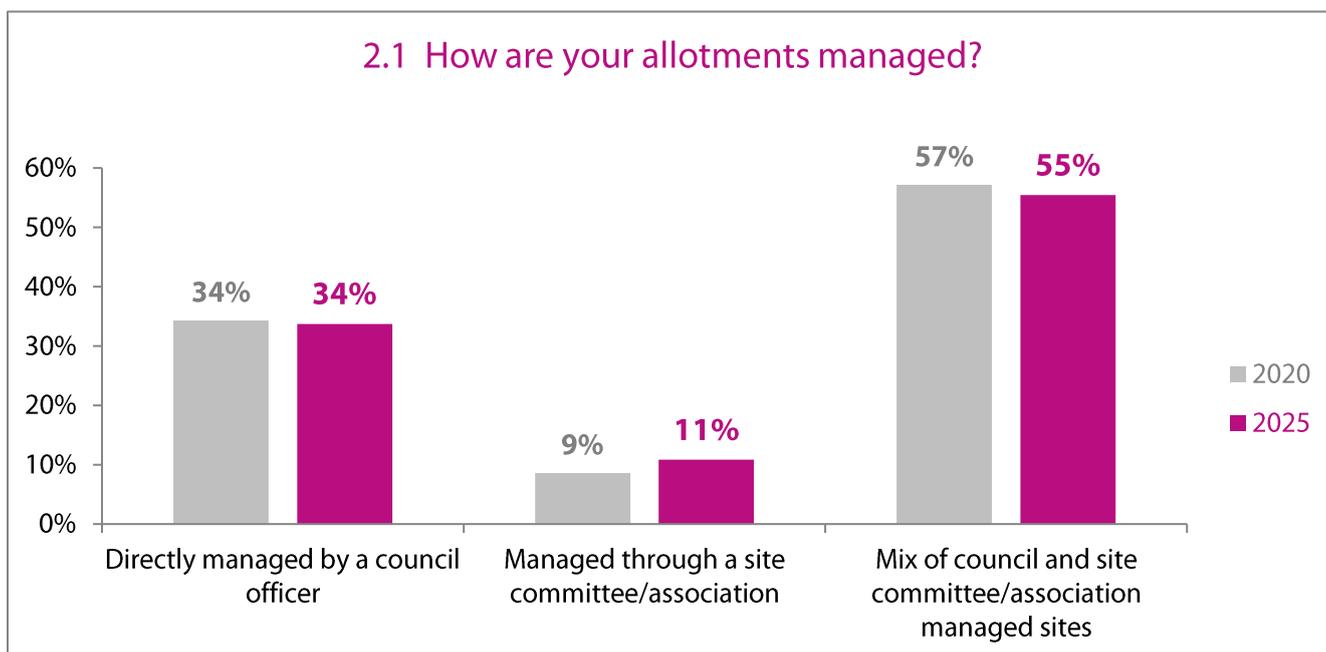
² <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/could-an-allotment-cut-the-cost-of-your-weekly-food-shop-tr3rzwst>

³ <https://gb.readly.com/magazines/bbc-gardeners-world-magazine/2024-01-18/6589edfca0bc61d3ac40b842>

⁴ <https://www.hortweek.com/demand-plots-remains-high-while-pressure-grows-allotment-services-cost-neutral-new-survey-finds/parks-and-gardens/article/1884506>

⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Edw7/8/36/section/23>

2 Management



The 2025 APSE State of the Market survey reveals a striking continuity in how local authority allotments are managed, with virtually no change in management models since 2020. According to the latest data:

- 34% of allotment services remain directly managed by a council officer,
- 11% are managed solely by a site committee or association, and
- the majority – 55% – continue to operate under a hybrid arrangement involving both council oversight and local site committees or associations.

In an era of stretched resources, it is notable that many councils continue to invest in direct management. This enduring model demonstrates continued confidence in the role of local authorities in delivering well-maintained, accessible and accountable allotment services. Direct management also ensures that allotment provision remains aligned with wider council strategies on public health, sustainability, green space and community engagement.



Struggling to manage your allotments? APSE can help...

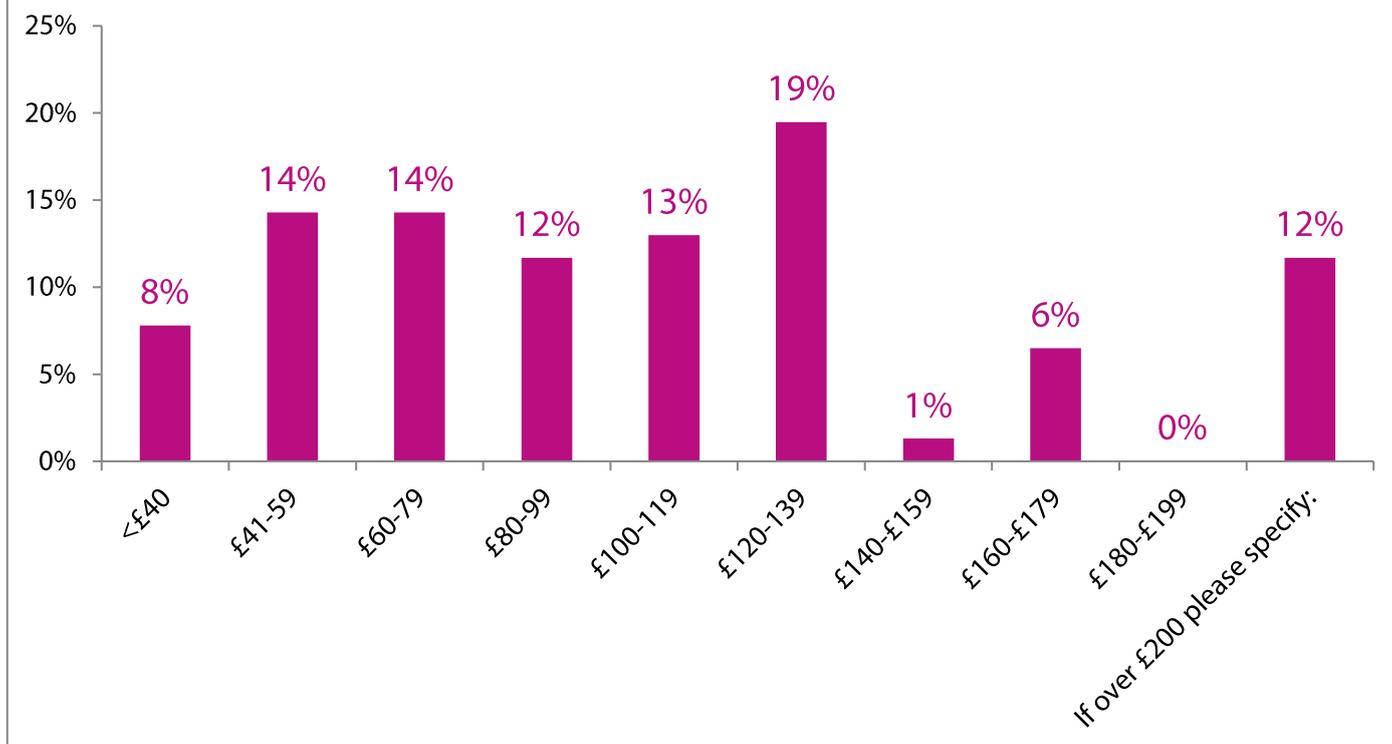
APSE Training has designed a highly interactive online course to help local authorities understand their obligations and the challenges involved in managing allotments e.g. funding, water, waiting lists, costs and enforcement, shared use, self-management, and site safety. For more information about

Managing Allotments in Local Authorities, and how you can book your place, [click here](#).

3 Cost

3.1 What is the cost per annum to rent an allotment plot in 2025/26?

(Note: if you have different costs according to size of land, please use the cost for a typical 250 square metre plot including water)

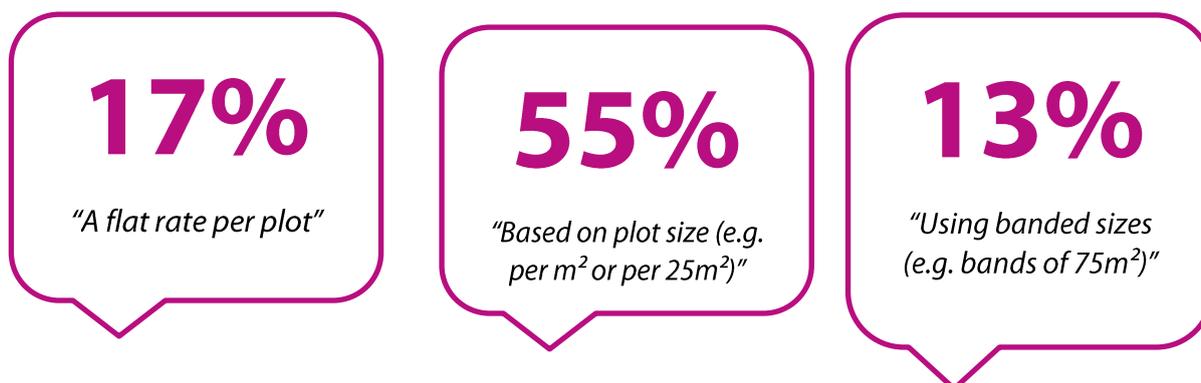


The uneven charging regimes for allotment plots across the UK can be attributed to several factors. These include variations in land availability and the level of demand for allotments in different regions. Furthermore, differences in maintenance costs and amenities provided by each allotment site can also contribute to the disparity in charging regimes.

3.1 reveals the uneven charging regimes in place for allotment plots across the UK. Using the cost for a typical 250 square metre plot including water, just over a fifth of those surveyed charge less than £60 a year (22%), whereas just under a fifth charge over £140 (19%). For those authorities charging over £200 for allotments, recorded figures range from £200 to £250. As expected, the bulk of councils charging over £140 are located in urban areas. The upper reporting limit for charges has been revised for the second consecutive year – rising from £90 to £200 in 2025 – reflecting not only the continued increase in allotment fees, but also the combined effects of inflationary pressures, local authority budget constraints and surging demand for plots.

Regarding those authorities pricing allotment plots at <£60 per annum, there has been a 10% drop since 2023 (32%) and a 32% drop since 2019 (55%).

How is plot rent calculated by your authority?



As plot rents continue to rise, especially in urban areas, how charges are calculated is becoming increasingly important, both for fairness and transparency.

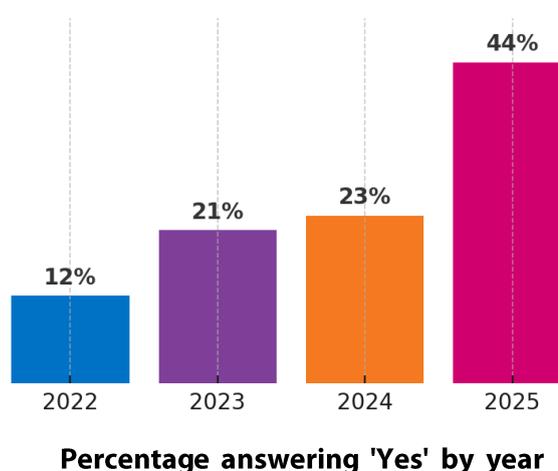
The 2025 APSE survey shows that:

- 55% charge per square metre or similar unit. This remains the most common approach, allowing for proportionality and fairness – larger plots incur higher charges, reflecting greater usage of land and resources.
- 13% use banded plot sizes (e.g. charging by size range).
- 17% apply a flat rate per plot, regardless of size.

Charging by size remains the most common and widely accepted approach, seen as fairer and more reflective of actual land use. Banded systems offer a simpler alternative while still recognising size differences. Flat-rate charging is less common and, while administratively straightforward, may be seen as unfair where plots vary widely.

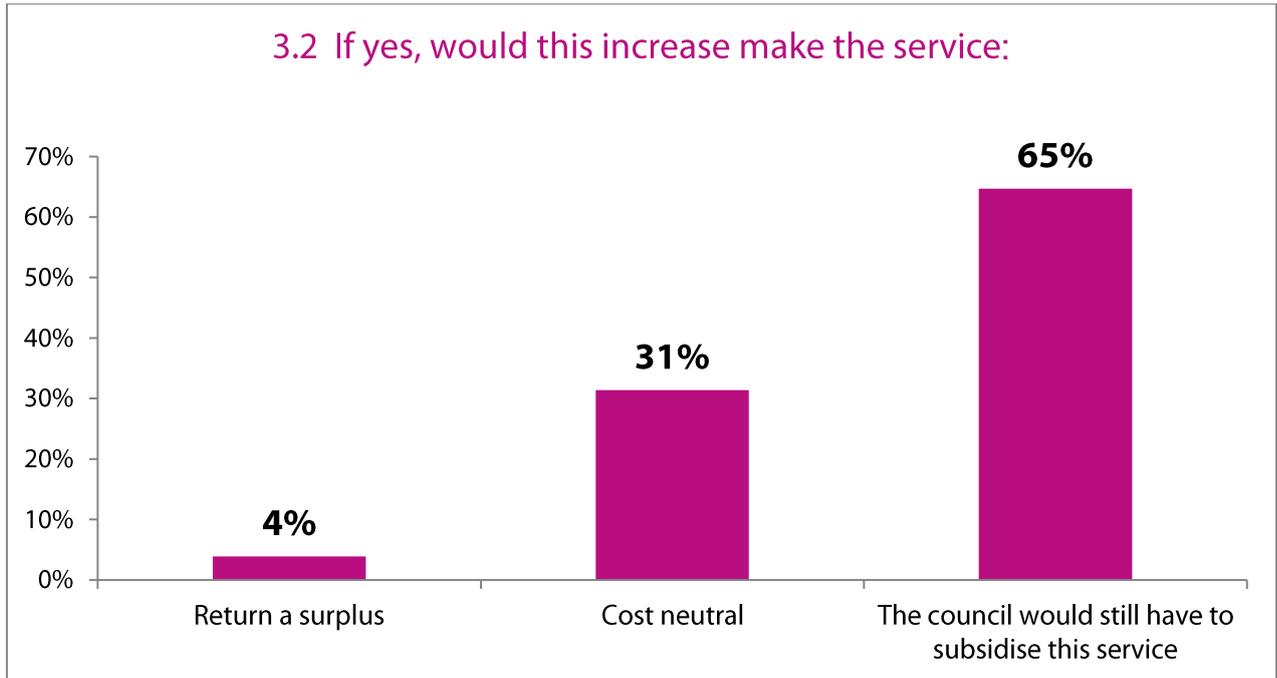
Has the cost per annum to rent an allotment plot increased (beyond an inflationary increase) during the past 2 years?

In terms of increased costs, 44% of respondents reported raising plot rents above the standard rate of inflation – a rise of 21 percentage points compared with 2023, and 32 points compared with 2022. As noted in the 2023 report, this trend "suggests moves to at least make the provision of allotments cost neutral."¹



¹ <https://apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/members-area/briefings/2023/23-37-state-of-the-market-survey-allotments-2023/>

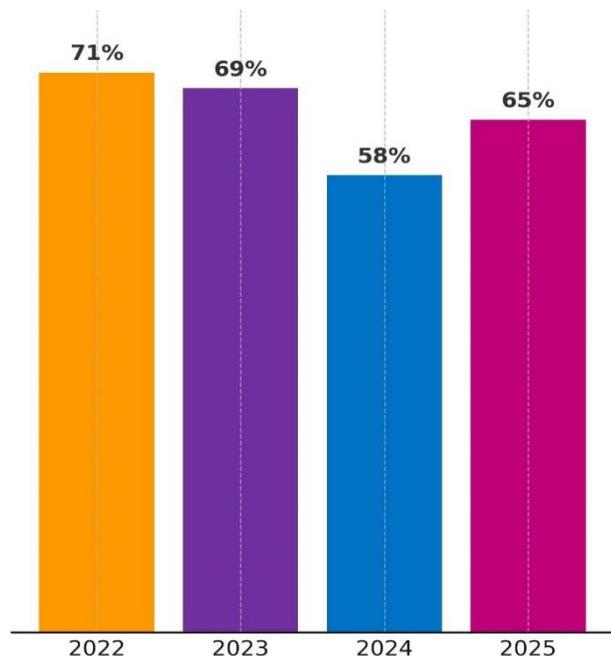
3.2 If yes, would this increase make the service:



3.2 shows that, among those who have increased costs beyond inflation, almost two-thirds (65%) are still subsidising the service. In other words, these are steps towards cost neutrality, but many councils continue to subsidise their allotment provision.

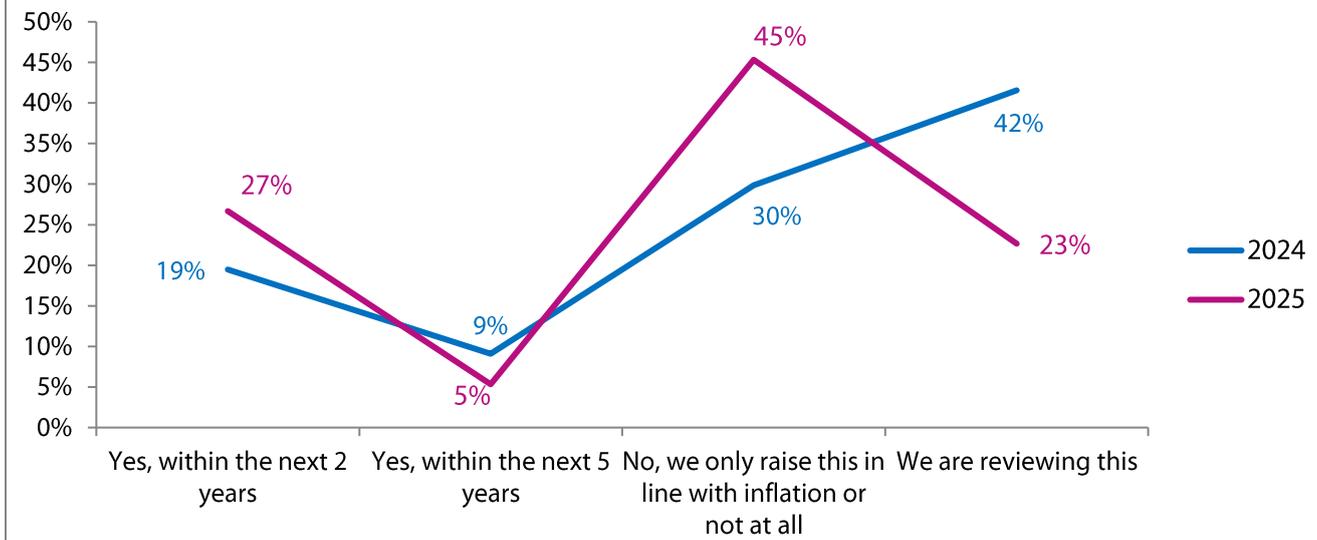
In 2025, the 65% of councils still subsidising their allotment service marks a reversal of the downward trend seen from 2022 to 2024.

This reversal may be driven by rising running and maintenance costs, alongside policy decisions to keep allotments affordable for certain groups, meaning full cost recovery remains an aspiration for many authorities.



The council would still have to subsidise the service

3.3 Are you intending to increase the price of allotment plots?



3.3 shows that the picture on allotment pricing has shifted since 2024.

There has been an 8 percentage point rise in respondents planning to increase plot prices within the next two years (from 19% to 27%), suggesting growing short-term financial pressures. In contrast, those planning increases within the next five years have fallen slightly by 4 percentage points.

Notably, there’s been a 15 percentage point increase in authorities stating they will “only raise prices in line with inflation, if at all,” alongside a 19 percentage point drop in those currently “reviewing” pricing. This may reflect a move away from active pricing reviews toward more inflation-linked or fixed approaches, aiming to balance cost recovery with affordability.

Allotment service troubles sprouting up? APSE can help...



APSE regularly receives queries on allotments from our member councils. We source responses to these queries by circulating them to our extensive UK-wide network of parks professionals.

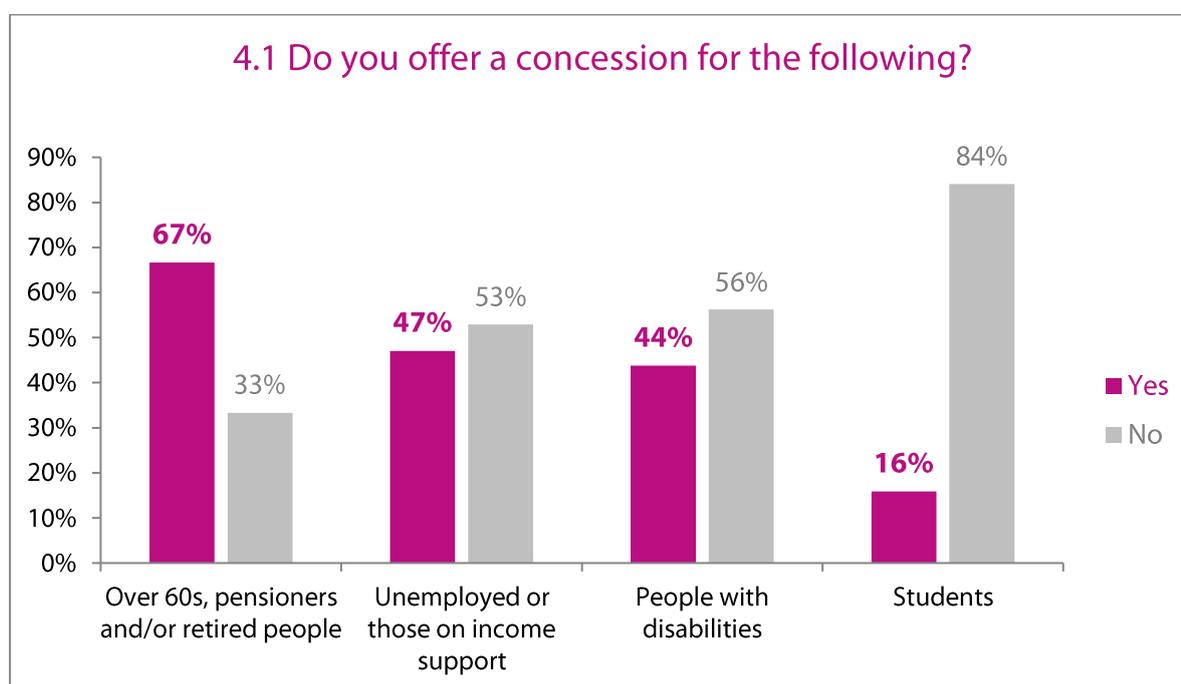
If you belong to an APSE member council and have allotment queries – or any queries relating to grounds maintenance – the APSE network may have the answers. Connect with the APSE network and get involved with our Network Queries service [here](#).

4 Concessions

60%
"Yes"

Are concessionary / discount prices offered?

Concessionary or discounted rents remain a feature of most local authority allotment regimes, with 60% of councils offering some form of concession in 2025. This represents a small decline from 2024 but indicates continued recognition of the social and health benefits allotments provide to vulnerable groups.



4.1 reveals "Over 60s pensioners and/or retired people" remain the most likely recipients of concessionary prices for allotment plots with 67% of respondents offering discounts to this protected group (a small decrease of 3% from 2024). There has also been a small uptick in those offering discounts to "People with disabilities" from 2024, highlighting a growing recognition of the importance of accessibility and inclusion within allotment schemes.

The number of allotment authorities offering concessionary prices to the "Unemployed or those on income support" remains steady at 47% though there has been a further decline in the number offering concessions to "Students" (16%). This is down 8% from 2024 (24%) and a further 8% from 2023 (32%). This may indicate a perception that students have less need for subsidised allotments; signaling a shift in focus towards other demographic groups or a reassessment of who benefits most from concessions.

4.2 % of concessions

	0-10%	10-20%	20-30%	30-40%	40-50%	Over 50%
Over 60s, pensioners and/or retired people	6%	12%	21%	15%	47%	0%
Unemployed or those on income support	4%	13%	13%	9%	57%	4%
People with disabilities	5%	14%	14%	19%	43%	5%
Students	0%	29%	29%	29%	14%	0%

When setting a concession, 4.2 shows the 40-50% range remains by far the most popular amongst authorities when applying the discount to protected groups. The 20-30% range is the second most common.

Some authorities continue to adopt generous local policies – for example, full discounts for site volunteers or site secretaries – while others have tightened criteria in response to budget pressures.

Comments include:

"Based on the condition of the plot at the time of the tenancy being taken on. If a plot is overgrown, then we will offer the plot as is in return for discounted rent (free period)."

"Those on pension credit/universal/council tax reduction (excluding student/single person)/ housing benefit."

"Armed forces."

"30% for all tenants over the national retirement age, currently 67. 50% for all tenants over the age of 60 who have been an allotment tenant since the 22nd August 2016."

" People on means tested benefits- PIP, Disability living allowance, attendance allowance, jobseekers Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, Univ Credit, Working Tax credit, Pension Credit, Employment Support Allowance."

"Site Secretary 100% on one full plot."

5 Access

57%

"Yes"

Do you make provision for people with disabilities to access allotment plots?

A majority of respondents (57%) reported making provision for people with disabilities to access allotment plots, indicating steady progress towards greater inclusivity in local allotment services. Common adaptations include the provision of raised beds, accessible pathways and plot allocations near entrances, parking, or toilets.

Many councils also highlighted efforts to tailor plot allocation to individual needs through communication during the application process. While some sites have made significant investments such as installing wide access gates, surfaced paths and disability-friendly community plots, others noted limitations due to site restrictions or ongoing development to meet accessibility standards. Overall, the responses indicate positive progress towards making allotments more accessible, though the level of provision varies across councils.

"We have recently opened a new community allotment site which has been designed to have accessible areas and facilities such as raised beds and wide pathways."

"If we are made aware of a disability on an application for an allotment we will endeavour to allocate a suitable plot."

"Reasonable adjustments when practicable, including identifying plots near parking/site entrances/plot swaps, improving plot access through wider gates and surfaced paths, and supplying raised beds."

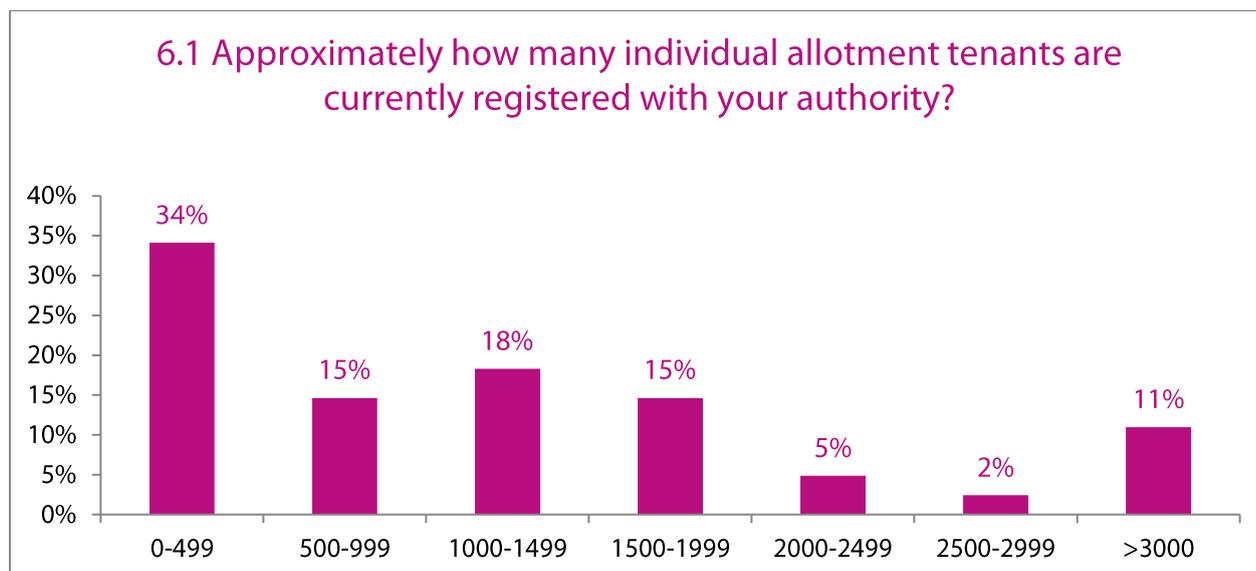
"Council grant-aided upgrading of access path at one site."

"We try to locate those with disabilities closer to the main access gate on a more level plot or we have some sites with raised planters that can be offered."

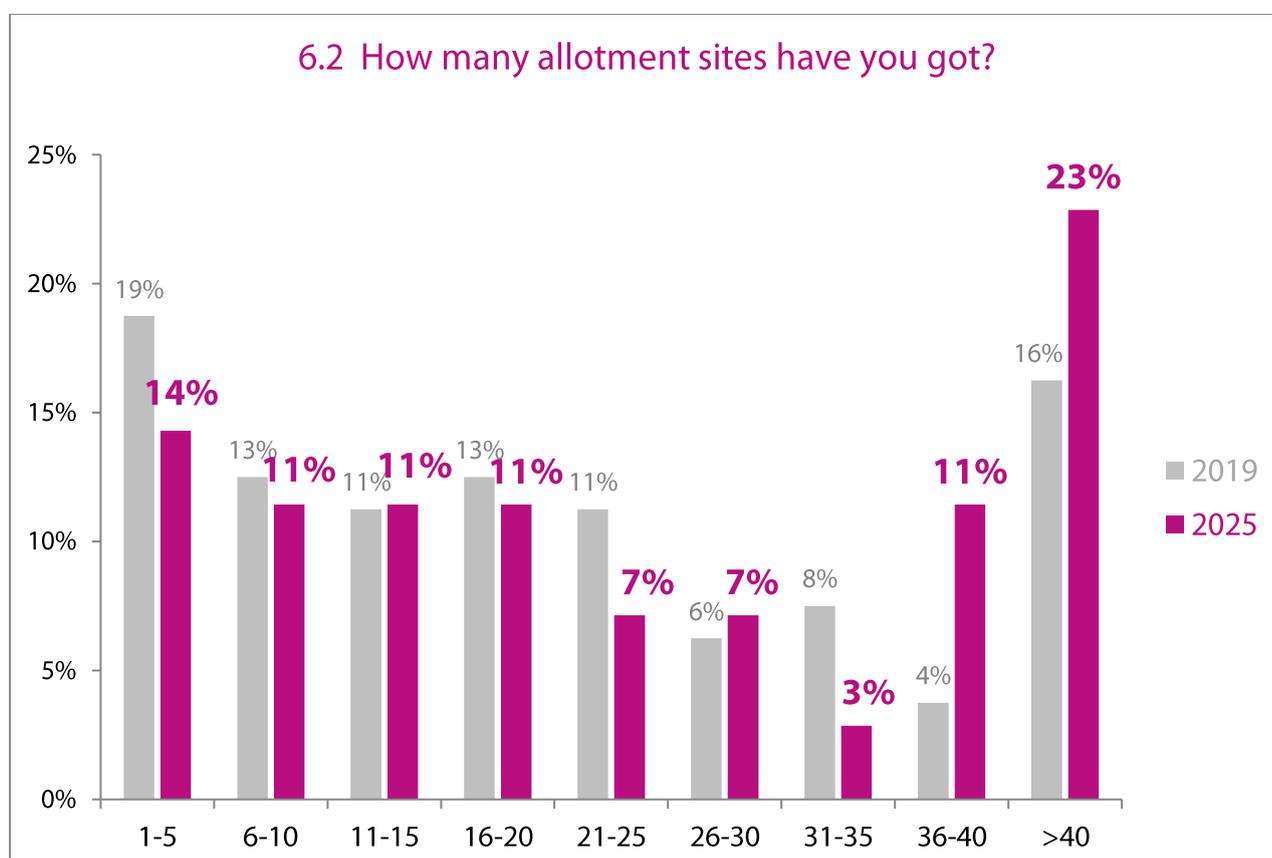
"New sites being developed meet DDA requirements. We also provided wheelchair accessible raised beds on sites developed prior to the enactment of the DDA."

"Most allotment associations also provide and design areas to be accessible and help support people with disabilities."

6 Number of tenants/sites/plots



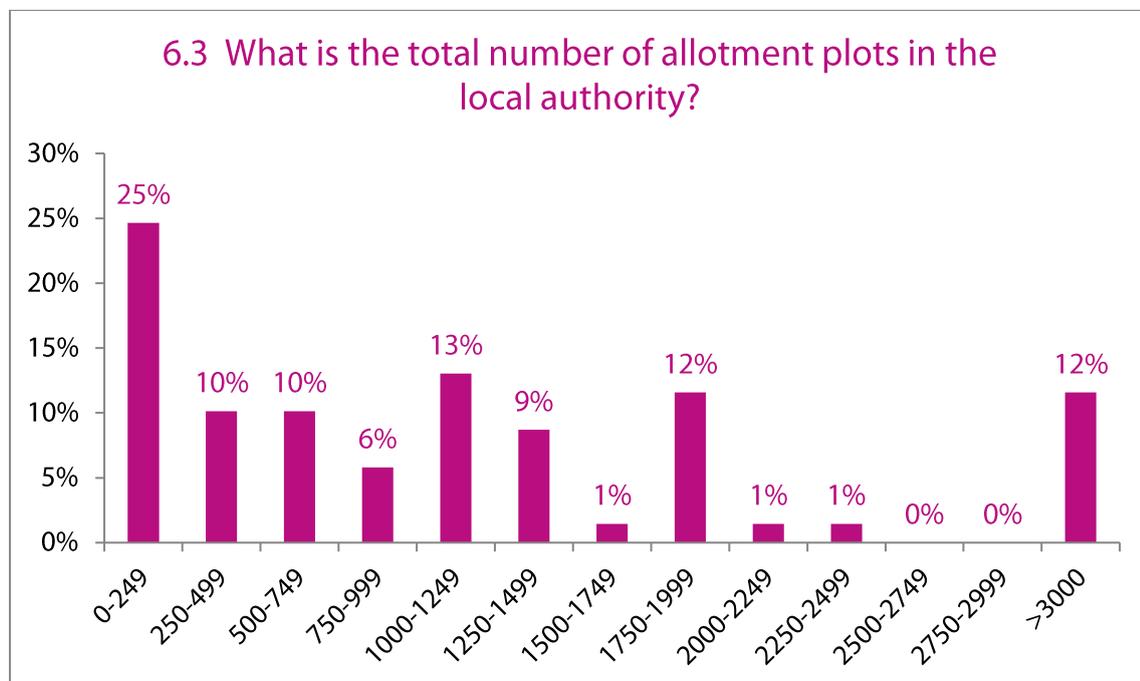
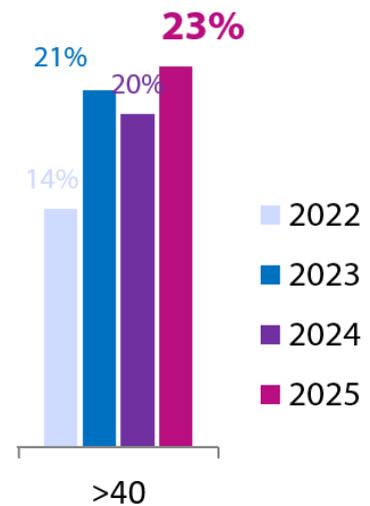
6.1 shows a wide range in the size of allotment tenant populations across authorities. Around a third (34%) have fewer than 500 registered tenants, mainly reflecting smaller or more rural councils. Meanwhile, 18% report between 1,000 and 1,499 tenants, and a combined 32% fall within the 500 to 1,999 range, indicating a substantial number of medium-sized allotment services. Larger authorities with more than 2,500 tenants account for 13% of respondents, including 11% with over 3,000 tenants, mainly representing major urban areas.



The findings from 6.2 have been cross-referenced with the 2019 findings as this was the last pre-COVID survey and, as a result, the last survey before the general surge in demand for plots.

In 6.2, by plotting against 2019, one can observe authorities are being proactive in trying to meet demand. In this instance, by increasing the number of allotment sites in the local area: 37% of authorities now possess >30 allotment sites as opposed to 27% in 2019.

There has also been a 9% increase in the number of authorities in possession of >40 sites from 2022, suggesting continued expansion in high-capacity areas.



35%
"Yes"

Does the council have plans to increase the number of allotments?

Almost a third of those surveyed intend to increase the number of allotments in their local area to help meet demand. This is an 18% drop from 2024 which may suggest that many local authorities might still be constrained by land availability, budgetary limits or competing resource priorities.

If you plan to increase the number of allotments, what will be the method of provision?

	2022	2023	2024	2025
Direct provision by the council of additional plots	73%	75%	50%	68%
Provision by builders/developers as part of a housing/planning policy	50%	30%	56%	55%
Provision by community groups supported/facilitated by council	41%	45%	37%	32
Provision by other council departments (e.g., Education, Social Work) as part of a healthy lifestyles/eco-schools/health type project	32%	20%	8%	23%
Other	18%	5%	13%	18%

The latest data reveals the preferred methods of increasing the number of allotments are:

- **Direct Council Provision (68%)** has returned to being the most common method, recovering from a dip in 2024 (50%). This rebound suggests renewed investment or reprioritisation of council-led community growing projects.
- **Builders/Developers (55%)** have increased involvement compared to 2023 (30%), likely due to stronger planning policy integration or incentives for housing developers to include allotments.
- **Community Groups (32%)** show a drop from 2023 (45%), perhaps due to reduced funding.
- **Other Council Departments (23%)** has seen a partial recovery from 2024's low (8%), indicating tentative reintegration into health and wellbeing initiatives.
- **Other Methods (18%)** have returned to 2022 levels.

Comments noted that ongoing resource constraints continue to hinder council capacity to directly provide new allotments. Therefore, incorporating allotments into broader urban planning frameworks and negotiated planning permissions – requiring private developers to include allotments as part of new housing developments – can ensure the continued creation of allotment spaces without straining public resources. However, the risk with this approach lies in ensuring developers maintain these sites and do not let them fall into a state of dereliction. Comments noted that where this occurs, the council is expected to step in and take responsibility for the site.

The National Allotment Society have recently produced a set of practical, design-led and policy-based guidelines for planners and developers who are looking to include allotments in new developments.²

² <https://thenas.org.uk/uploads/NAS%20Development%20Brochure%202023%20LR.pdf>

7 Plot size

76%

"Yes"

Have you reduced the size of your plots to create smaller-sized plots to allow waiting lists to be reduced?

A little over three-quarters of those surveyed (76%) report reducing the size of their plots to create smaller-sized plots. This is a 3% increase on 2024 and 12% higher than reported in 2022. Comments noted that, though reducing waiting lists is the overriding reason why plots are being downsized, smaller plots are frequently described as more attractive to younger or working applicants and hobby gardeners who lack time for larger plots:

"On some sites dependent upon demand and design of the site."

"We are considering entry level plots which are 5mts x 3mts as a lot of people are simply aspirational gardeners and cannot manage and maintain our present minimum sized plot (quarter plot/10mts x 6mts.)"

"Wherever possible, larger plots are being spit to make them more manageable / enjoyable, this has also helped to reduce our waiting lists."

"Once a tenant leaves we ask the next person on the list show them the plot to see if they can manage the size, if not we will reduce the size."

"We are reducing our historical full size plots which have proven in the last few years too big for most applicants and are being split to produce to standard plots up to 179sqm each plot."

"As legacy plot holders move on, plots are divided into smaller plots."

"We have been splitting 10 rod plots into 5 rod plots where feasible."

"We offer half plots, unless plot cannot be split. We also offer quarter plots."

"Some large plots have been turned in to starter plots that are more manageable to working families."

"We have created starter plots smaller for people with less time."

If you have reduced plot size to create more allotments how has the public reacted?

Authorities report that public reaction to downsizing remains largely positive where change is managed collaboratively with associations and existing plot-holders:

"Very happy people cant manage large plots - no time - but just want to grow something. They have a sense of community and they have fresh air and exercise."

"It has been welcomed and accepted by allotment associations and plot holders, however it is not something that we actively publicise."

"Very positively, the smaller plots are managed well, with tenants using the space more efficiently."

"Favourably. Large plots are hard to modern families to manage."

"Positively for getting people on allotments and off the waiting list. But this does put additional pressure on associations and the council to manage more people and plots."

"There have been no complaints about this. There are very few people left that can manage a 25mts x 10mts plot."

"Plots are gradually reduced and a new site with starter plots was established. There were no complaints."

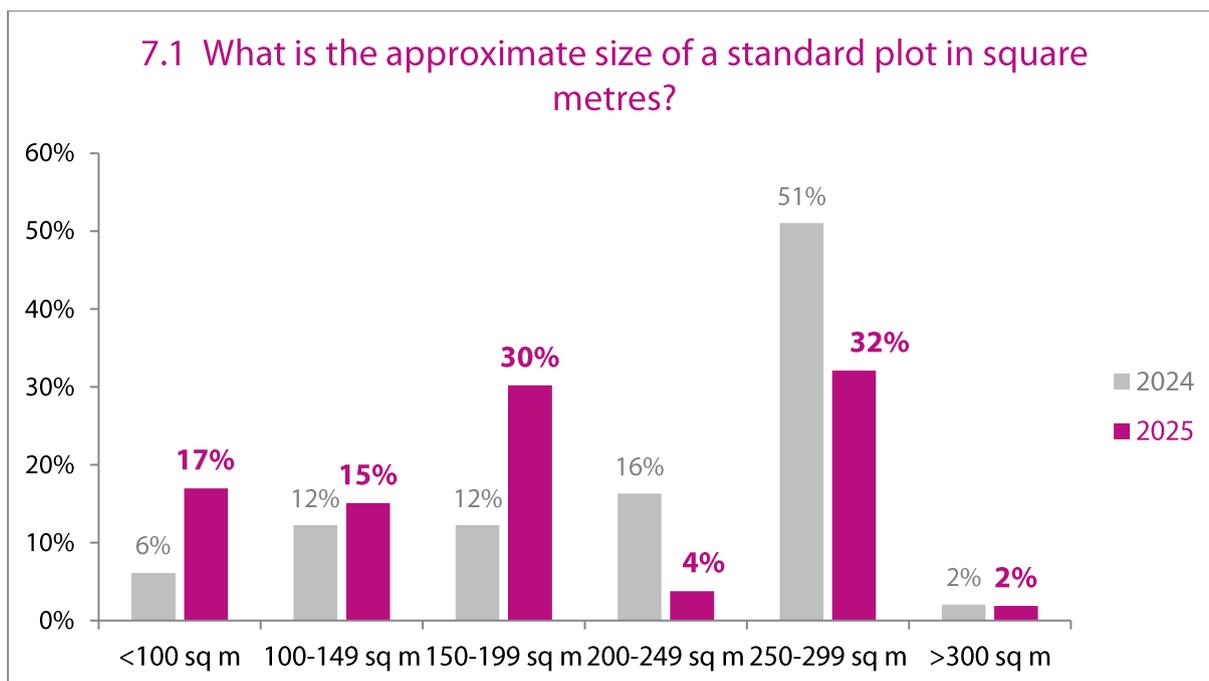
"Most applicants would struggle with larger plots in excess of 179sqm and this allows more applicants the chance of a plot."

25 sq.m

Smallest plot

What is the size of your smaller plots?

The smallest plots of those surveyed range from 25sq.m at the lowest end to 125sq.m at the highest end. In the comments, these smaller plots are referred to as "micro plots" or "kitchen garden plots", illustrating the broadening of allotment typologies to suit differing user needs.



7.1 reveals a notable shift in the definition of a “standard” plot, with a 19% drop in respondents identifying 250–299 sq.m as standard and a near-equivalent rise in those selecting 150–199 sq.m. Overall, 7.1 shows a clear trend towards smaller standard plot sizes, though 250–299 sq.m remains the norm for roughly one-third of authorities.



Out of the loop with your council peers? APSE can help...

All APSE members can sign up to APSE’s Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance Network. This online network provides at least four meetings across the year, with expert speakers from across local government and the wider parks and greenspace sector. The network is your chance to talk about the latest legislation, technology and best practice with your peers in local government. Be sure to sign up for the network [using this link](#).

8 Plot ownership

55%

"Yes"

Do you restrict plot ownership to a person or a household? i.e. one plot per household?

For the first time since APSE began conducting this survey, a majority of allotment authorities (55%) now restrict plot ownership to a single person or household. This represents a 12% increase compared to last year and suggests growing efforts by councils to manage limited allotment resources more equitably, ensuring broader access within communities. By limiting ownership to one plot per household, authorities can prevent a small number of individuals from monopolising allotment space, helping to reduce waiting lists and increase fairness.

65%

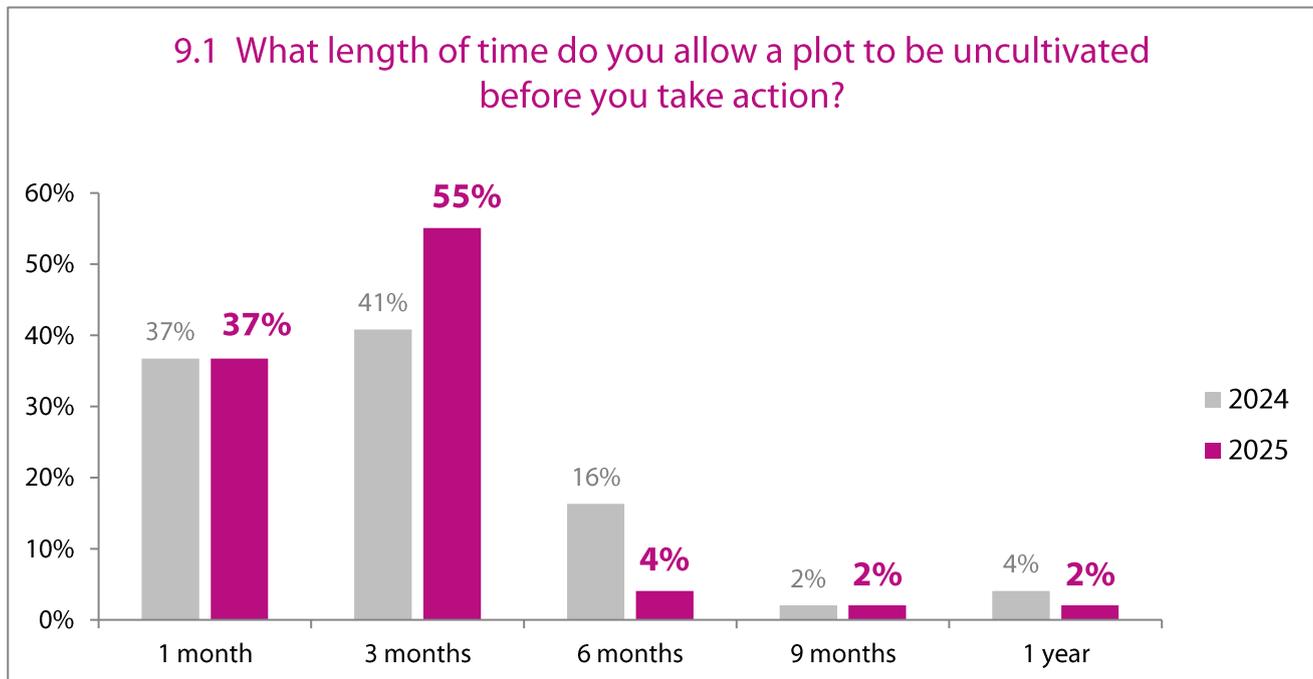
"No"

Can plots be passed on to families and friends?

The decisive majority of authorities surveyed do not permit allotments to be transferred to family members or friends (up 3% from 2024). While historically some plot-holders were allowed to hold multiple plots, an increasing number of councils are now phasing out this practice to better manage high demand and ensure fairer access for more individuals.

9 Monitoring

The primary focus of monitoring is to ensure compliance with tenancy agreements, including maintenance standards, permissible structures and the prevention of waste accumulation.



9.1 reveals that just 8% of authorities now allow allotments to remain uncultivated for more than three months before taking action, marking a substantial decrease from 22% in 2024. This reduction likely reflects councils' increasing efforts to address issues caused by neglected plots - such as safety hazards and pest infestations - and to promote more effective use of allotments. By tightening enforcement of plot maintenance, authorities encourage active cultivation or timely relinquishment of unused plots, helping to reduce idle land and better manage waiting lists of prospective plot-holders.

30%
"Yes"

Are plot-holders required to undertake a probationary period to ensure they can manage their plot effectively?

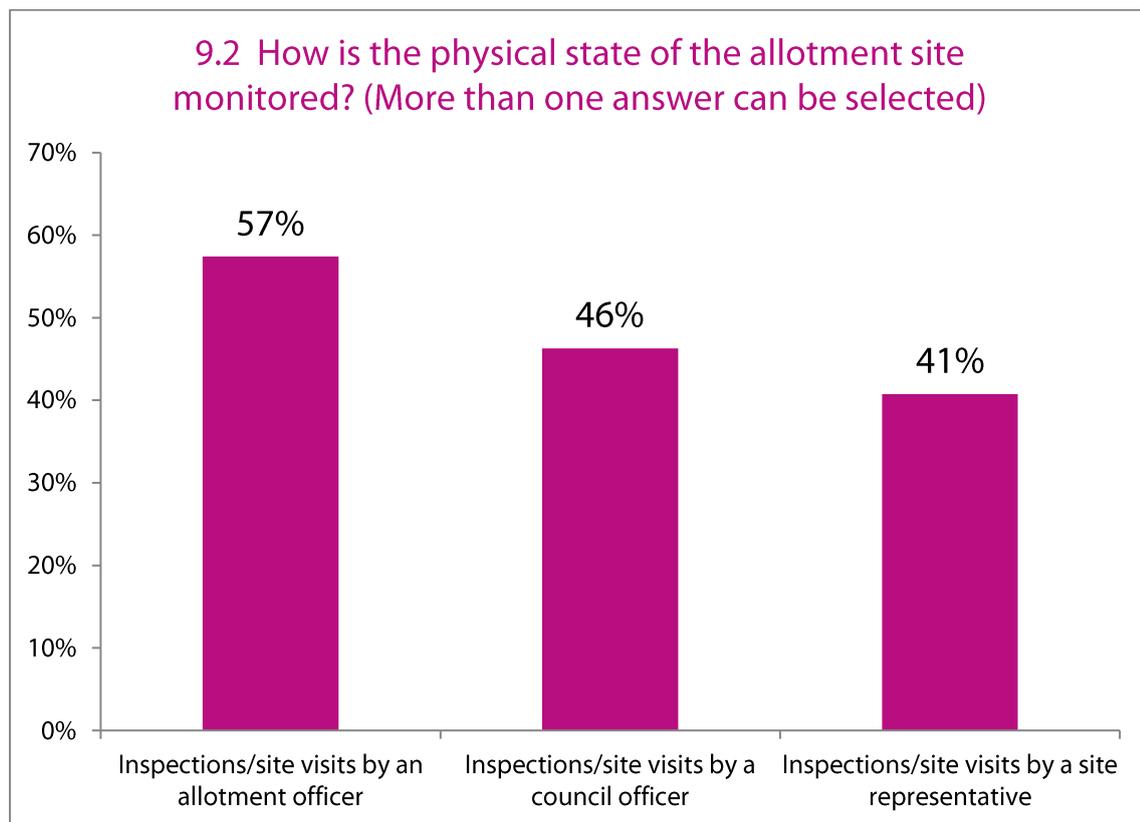
Around 30% of authorities now require plot-holders to undertake a probationary period to ensure they can manage their allotment effectively an increase of 12% from 2024. Given the lengthy waiting lists across many UK authorities (see section 7), it is understandable that those who secure a plot take their responsibilities seriously.

The probationary periods mentioned by authorities generally range from 3 to 6 months, with 3 months dominating responses.

Some authorities noted that plot-holders are expected to begin cultivating their plots within 3 weeks of allocation. Others highlighted that while probation periods are encouraged, management of this process is not always consistent.

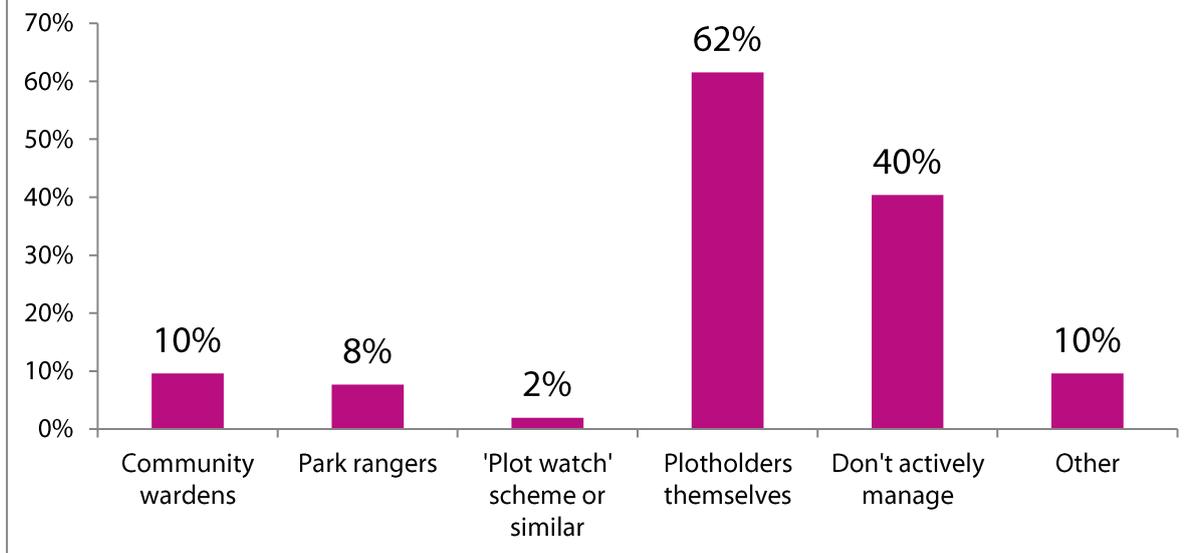
A few councils also mentioned trial approaches such as starting new plot-holders on smaller “micro plots” before upgrading to full-sized plots. This helps new gardeners understand the time and effort required to maintain a plot effectively.

Overall, many authorities see probationary periods as a positive step towards ensuring allotments are well managed and used responsibly.



Monitoring the physical state of allotment sites involves multiple approaches. The most common method, used by 57% of respondents, is inspections or site visits conducted by an allotment officer, reflecting a specialised role focused on allotment management. Council officers also play a significant role, carrying out inspections in 46% of cases, which may indicate broader oversight within local authority teams. Additionally, 41% of sites are monitored by site representatives.

9.3 How do you manage security on allotment sites? (More than one answer can be selected)



Security management on allotment sites primarily relies on plot-holders themselves, with 62% of respondents indicating this approach. This reflects a strong community role in monitoring and protecting the sites. However, 40% of respondents reported not actively managing security, suggesting a potential area for improvement or differing local contexts where formal security measures may be less necessary. Formal security measures such as community wardens (10%) and park rangers (8%) play a smaller role, while schemes like 'plot watch' are relatively rare (2%).

In the comments, it is noted that physical security measures, including locked gates, fences, and security codes are commonly used to safeguard sites. Additionally, collaboration with local police and targeted patrols by council safer communities teams further support site security.

"The Council's Safer Communities team provide targeted patrolling on specific sites when required."

"We attempt to maintain good secure fences and gates all locked. Key return following change of tenancy does cause concern."

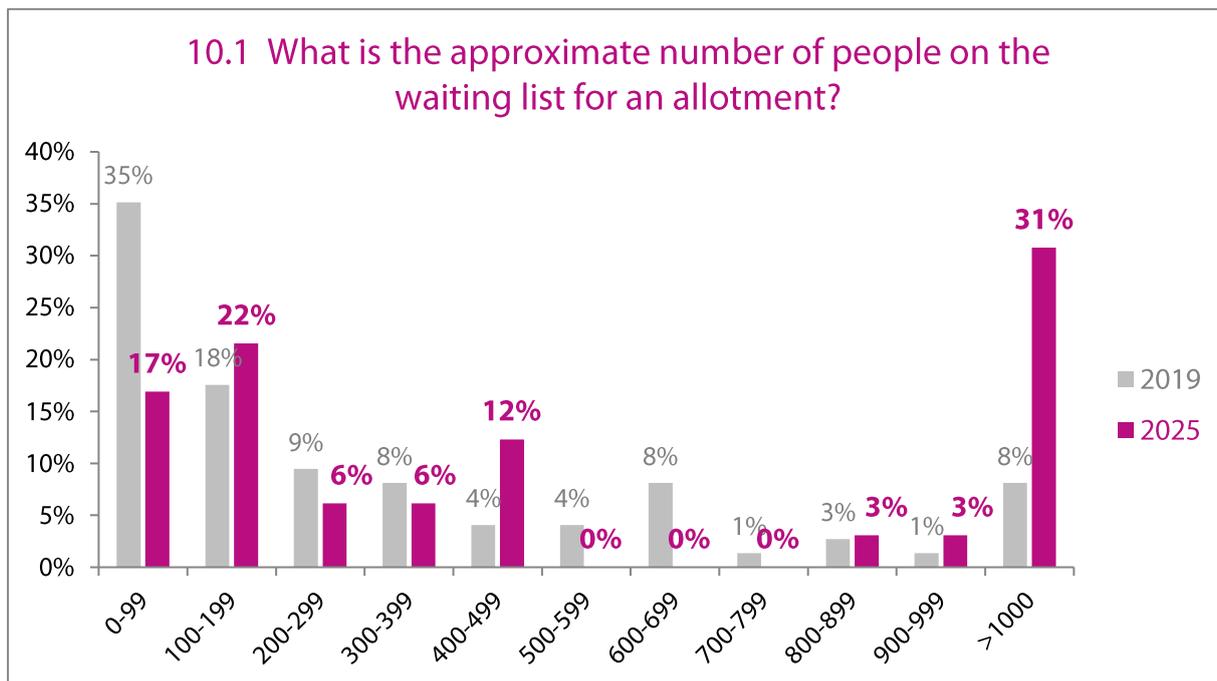
"Volunteer site wardens."

"Liaise with local community police officers."

"Gates are supplied with padlocks on most sites."

"Security codes at access gates."

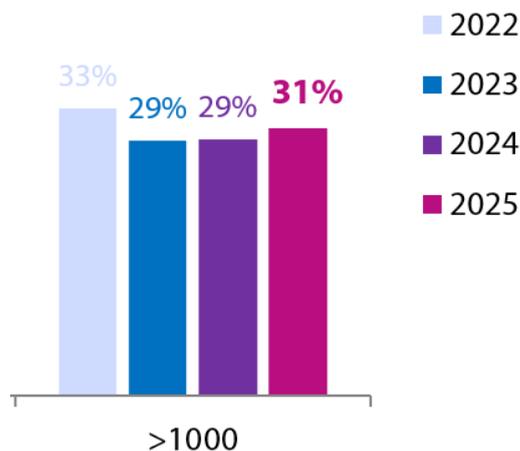
10 Waiting lists



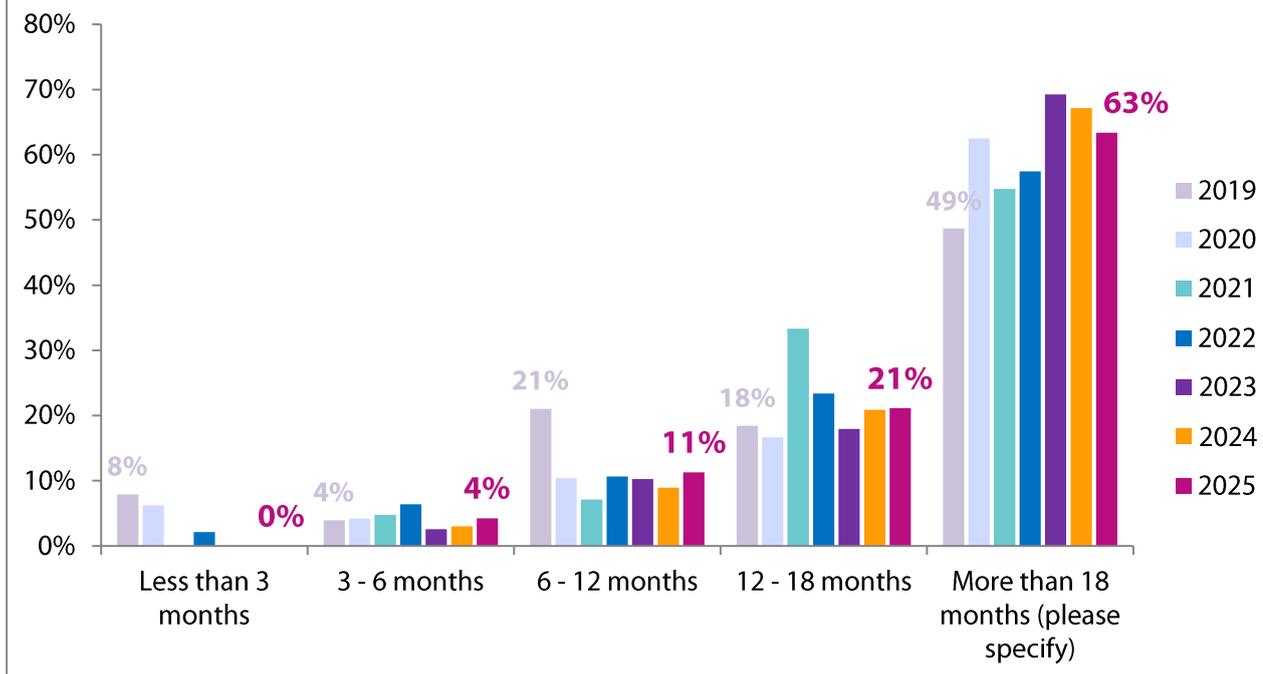
Waiting times for allotments have made national headlines in recent years due to a surge in demand, particularly following the COVID pandemic. Section 7.1 highlights how acute this demand has become over the past six years, with nearly a four-fold increase in the number of authorities reporting waiting lists exceeding 1,000 people.

However, when compared to previous years, the number of authorities with waiting lists over 1,000 has remained steady. Notably, this year marks the second time since 2020 (when it was 66%) that a majority of authorities (63%) report fewer than 500 people on their waiting lists.

The stabilisation in demand may be linked to changes in the number of allotment sites provided and adjustments to plot sizes. These factors are explored in greater detail in sections 5 and 6.



What is the average waiting time to receive an allotment plot?



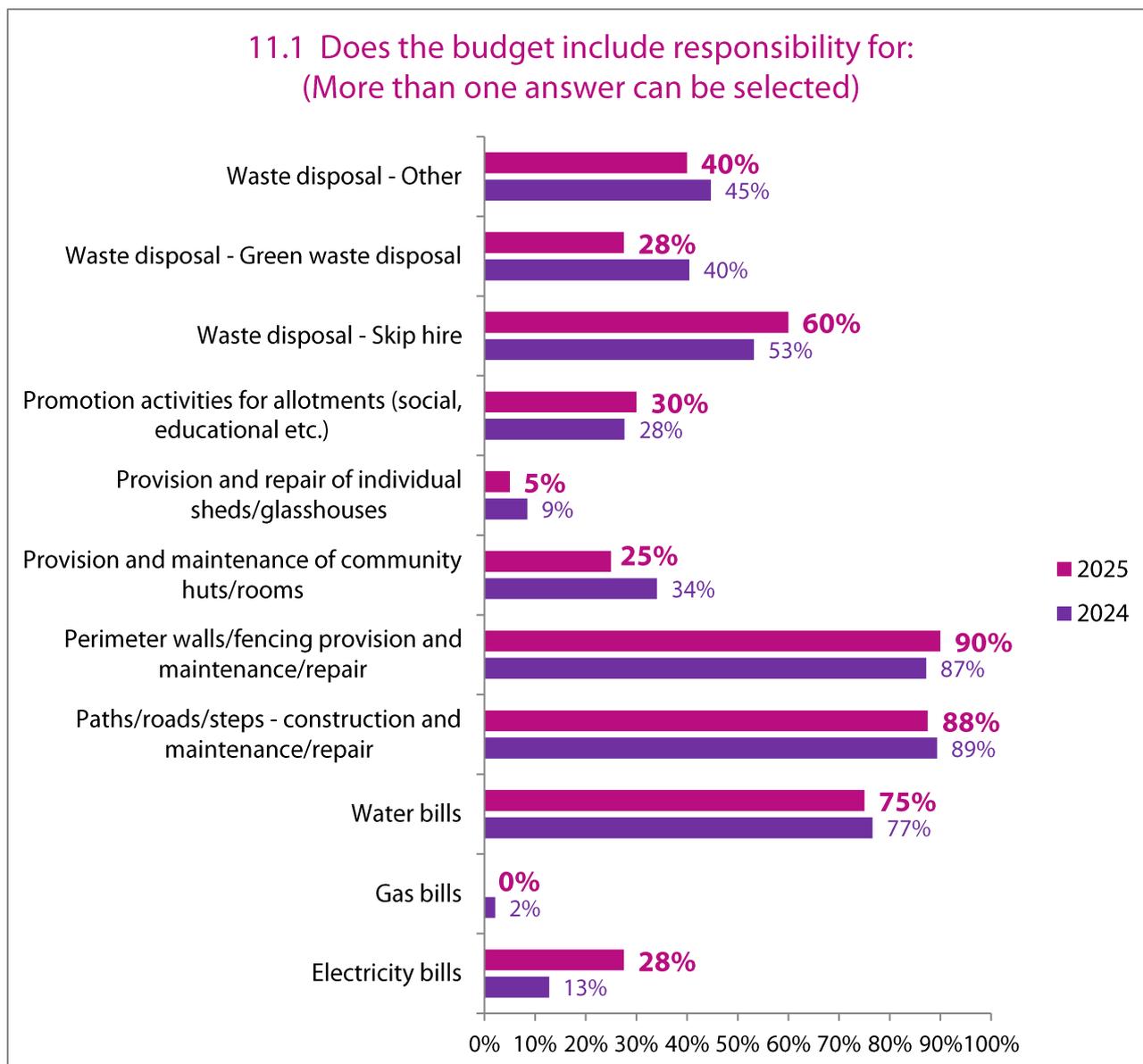
The average waiting time for an allotment plot has decreased slightly from the record high seen in 2023, but it remains significantly long, with 63% of authorities reporting extended wait times. This figure is still considerably higher than in previous years, compared to 49% in 2019 and 40% in 2018, illustrating a sustained and growing demand for allotment spaces over the past several years.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that for the third consecutive year, no authorities reported average waiting times of less than three months. This underscores the ongoing challenges faced by local authorities in meeting demand.



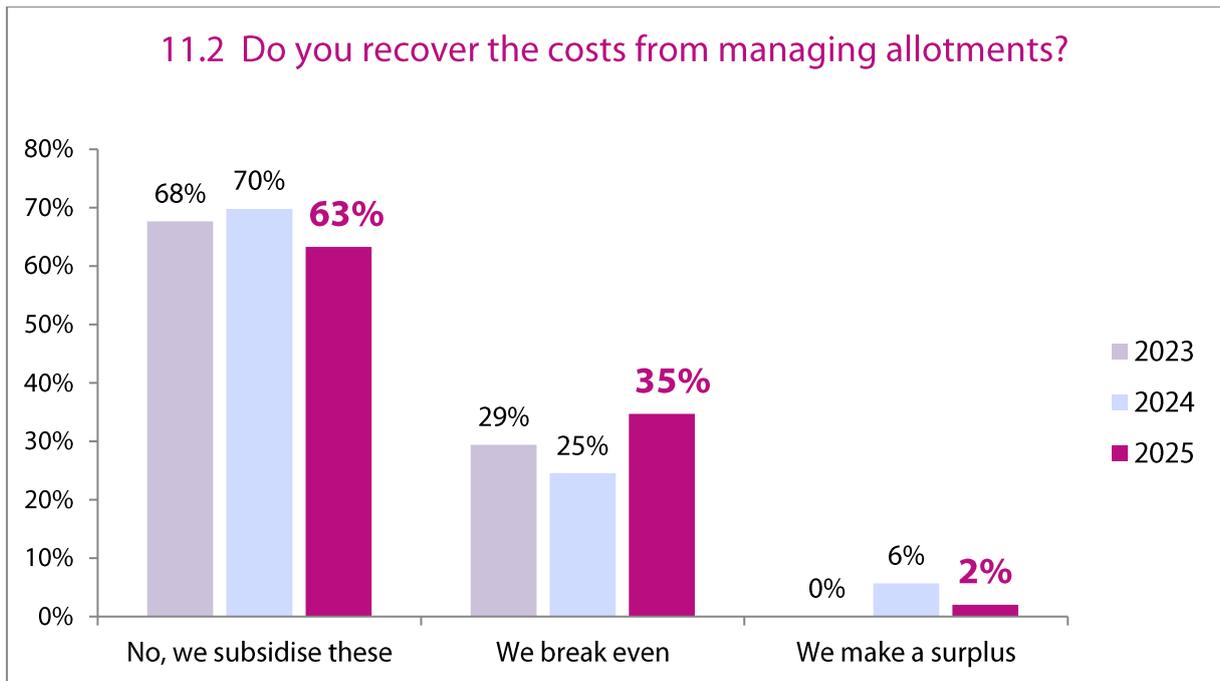
Despite authorities splitting plots to create smaller plots, which many people are willing to take in order to reduce their waiting time, demand remains very high. Therefore, it is unsurprising that 78% of respondents stated that new tenancies are restricted to people living within the local authority area.

11 Budget and subsidy



Budget pressures continue to shape the way local authorities deliver allotment services. While allotments are widely recognised for their health, wellbeing, environmental and community benefits, they compete for funding with statutory services, and are therefore vulnerable to budget constraints.

It is possible many of the infrastructure costs are no longer able to be borne by allotment associations even where sites are jointly managed; income from rents are no longer sufficient to cover expensive works associated with infrastructure maintenance and improvements.



11.2 Reveals almost two-thirds of respondents confirmed that their allotment services continue to be subsidised, but the trend is towards reducing the scale of that subsidy. Several councils reported recent rent increases designed to narrow the funding gap, with some aiming for full cost recovery over the medium term. These changes are often framed as necessary to protect the service in the long run, though councils acknowledge the need to balance affordability for tenants with financial sustainability.

12 Strategies

35%

"Yes"

Does the council have an allotments strategy?

Less than half of authorities report having an allotment strategy. For those authorities who do not have a strategy, some report that allotments are covered in their local plans (see below). In Scotland, authorities report that their food growing strategies – a statutory obligation under Part of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 – incorporates allotments.

32%

"Yes"

If not, is the council planning to develop one within the next two years?

For those authorities without a strategy in place, less than half report plans to develop one within the next two years. APSE's own training course – "Managing Allotments in Local Authorities" – equips allotment managers with the tools necessary for designing a successful strategy. You can learn about the course [here](#).

57%

"Yes"

Does your Health and Wellbeing strategy recognise the value of allotments?

The health and wellbeing benefits of maintaining an allotment plot are well-documented. 57% of authorities surveyed report their health and wellbeing strategies recognise the value of allotments.

57%

"Yes"

Does your Local Plan include specific policies as to the protection/provision of allotment sites?

Allotments are recognised in para 96 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as having a role in enabling and supporting healthy lifestyles.³ Para 124 of the NPPF also asks that "*Planning policies and decisions should: recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife.. and food production.*"⁴ For this reason, more than half of authorities report their Local Plans include specific policies as to the protection/provision of allotment sites.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/8-promoting-healthy-and-safe-communities>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/11-making-effective-use-of-land>

12.1 Wellbeing evidence from the National Allotment Society

Alongside APSE's own survey, the National Allotment Society (NAS) recently undertook a major Allotments and Wellbeing survey (February–May 2025), which received nearly 2,000 responses from members and non-members across the UK. Its findings provide further evidence of the powerful role allotments play in supporting health and community outcomes, complementing the trends highlighted in this report.

The NAS survey revealed that nearly 64% of respondents rated the mental health impact of allotments at the maximum 10/10, with over 90% scoring it at least 8/10. Many described allotments as providing stress relief and mindfulness – “walk in stressed, walk out smiling.” Similarly, the physical health benefits were strongly recognised, with over half of respondents again giving the maximum score, emphasising gardening as “exercise with purpose.”

On social outcomes, 80.3% of plot holders said they had built new social connections, though almost half also noted a lack of designated social spaces, pointing to opportunities for councils and associations to enhance community facilities. Nutritional benefits were also clear: 89.2% reported eating more fresh produce, with a wide range of crops, herbs and flowers contributing to healthier, seasonal diets.

Importantly, only 5.2% reported any link to social prescribing schemes, suggesting an untapped opportunity to embed allotments more firmly within local public health strategies.

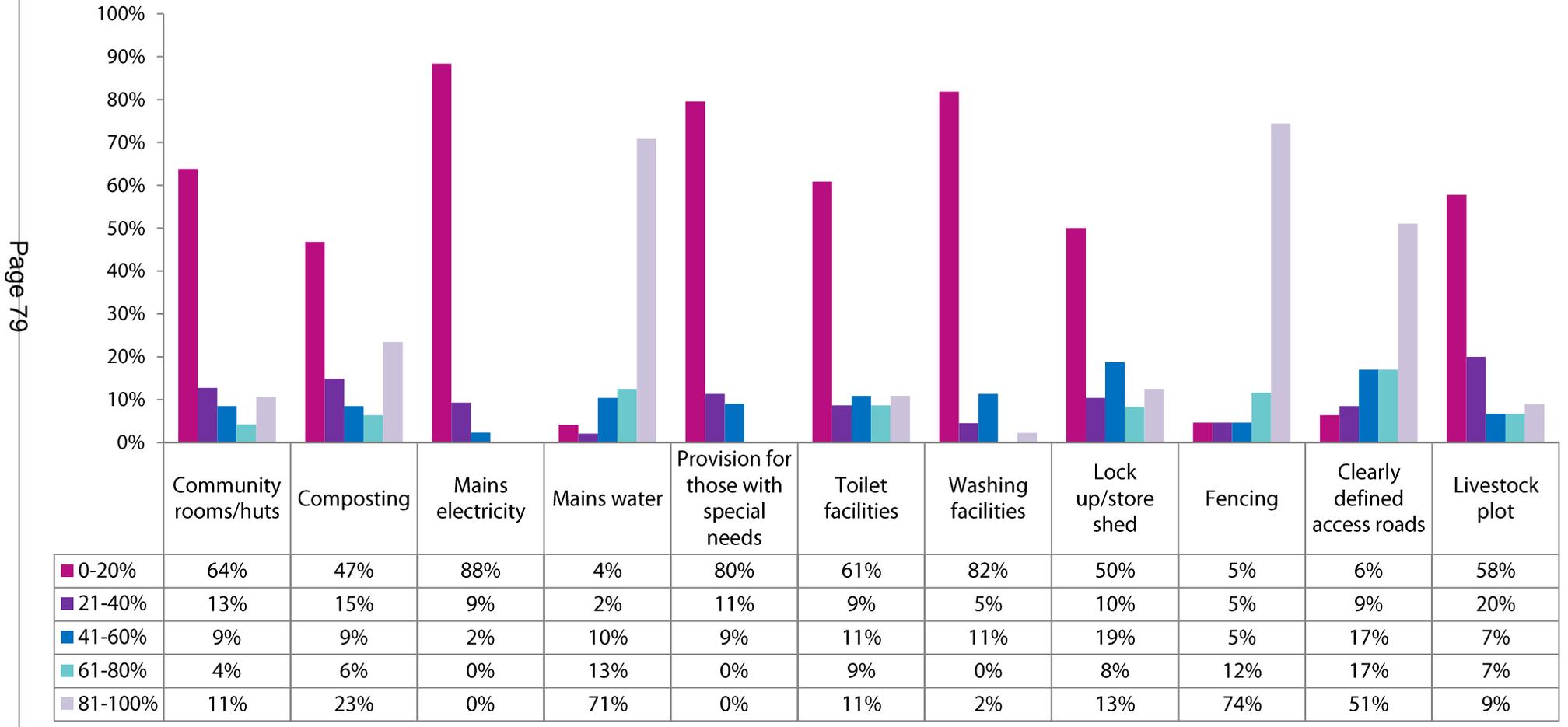
Taken together, the APSE and NAS surveys show that allotments are not only a valued leisure and food-growing resource but also a proven driver of wellbeing, resilience and community connection. Strengthening provision, improving accessibility and linking allotments more systematically to planning and health strategies will be crucial if these benefits are to be maximised in the years ahead.

Charlotte Watts, Marketing and PR Officer, and Company Secretary/General Manager, Sonia Gallagher, spoke on the NAS survey at the report online launch – *Gloves, Peas and Harmony: Local Authority Allotments Webinar – Data, Trends and Wellbeing Benefits* on Thursday 14 August. Their presentation is available to download from the APSE website [here](https://apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/members-area/apse-networks/parks-horticulture-grounds-maintenance/past-presentations/2025/gloves-peas-and-harmony-local-authority-allotments-webinar-free-for-members/).⁵

⁵ <https://apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/members-area/apse-networks/parks-horticulture-grounds-maintenance/past-presentations/2025/gloves-peas-and-harmony-local-authority-allotments-webinar-free-for-members/>

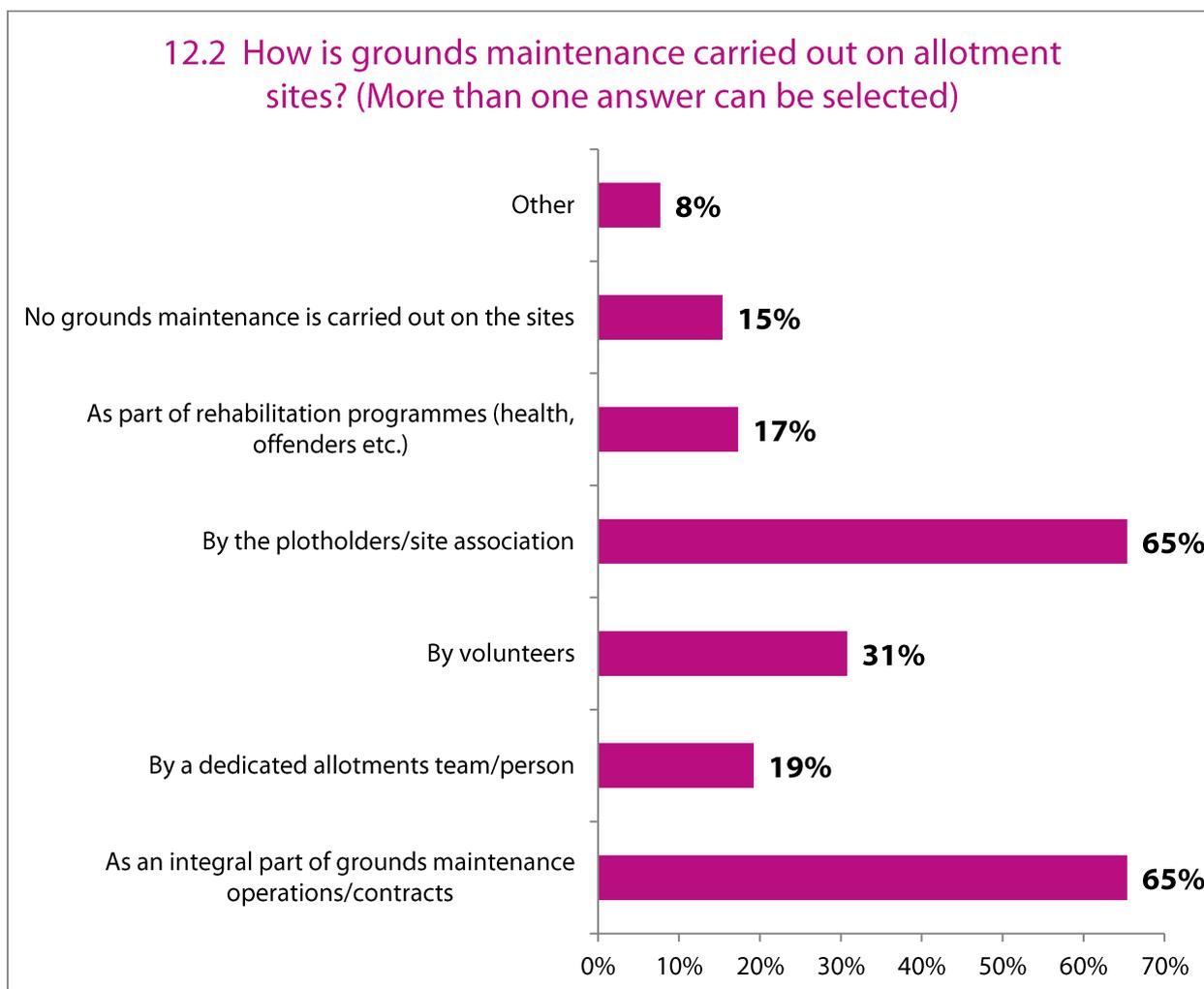
13 Amenities

13.1 What is the approximate percentage of allotment sites with:



12.1 provides a breakdown of the facilities included on allotment sites. Some key observations:

- 71% of authorities provide mains water to 81-100% of sites.
- 24% of authorities provide community rooms/huts to 41-100% of sites.
- 20% of authorities provide toilet facilities to 61-100% of sites.
- 51% of authorities provide clearly defined access roads on 81-100%.
- 74% of authorities provide fencing to 81-100% of sites.



13.2 Reveals that, for 65% of authorities, grounds maintenance at allotment sites is carried out as an integral part of grounds maintenance operations/contracts. 19% of authorities employ a dedicated allotments team/person to carry out grounds maintenance; this is the first time the figure has dropped below 20% since 2020.

Across the UK, many local authority allotment sites continue to be handed over to allotment associations as part of self-management initiatives. In 12.2, it is revealed that 65% of authorities report that site associations are responsible for maintaining sites. One benefit of this approach is that, at a time restrained local authority budget pressures, associations often have a better chance of raising funds than local authorities. These funds can then, in turn, be invested into the sites.

However, echoing the point raised in 6, there is a risk that non-local authority management of sites culminates in poor management. Even if backed by a robust legal structure, as noted by the South West Counties Allotment Association (SWCCA): *“There are negatives to self-management especially if it is accepted at the wrong time with little support: plot-holders stop turning up for meetings; nobody has the time to do plot inspections; plots become abandoned and, more often than not, one over-worked person ends up trying to cope with all the tasks required to run the site.”*¹¹

25%
“Yes”

Do you charge separately for water supply?

A quarter (25%) of respondents said they charge separately for water supply on their allotments. This suggests that while separate charging isn't the norm, it is a notable practice among allotment sites.

Of those who charge separately, most said they charge a flat rate for water supply on their allotments, with some basing the amount on plot size (e.g., £3 per pole, with one pole equating to 25 sqm) or a set annual fee (e.g., £8.65 per plot). A few mentioned charges linked to usage from the previous year, while one noted that a flat rate would be reviewed if costs became very high.

¹¹ <https://allotmentsstockport.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/a-guide-to-self-management-2.pdf>

14 Biodiversity/Sustainability

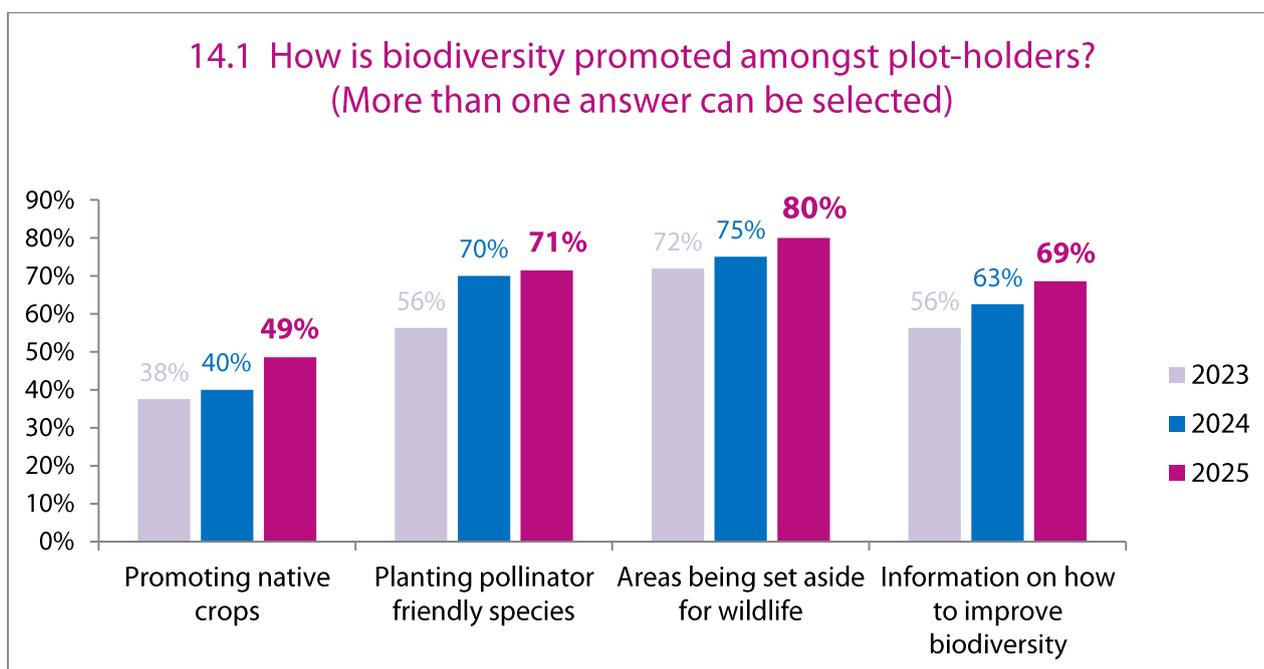
In May 2024, the four UK administrations published a joint UK Biodiversity Framework which aims to coordinate efforts to meet the UK's international obligations.¹²

In England, the Environment Act 2021 places a 'biodiversity duty' on public authorities. This means that, as a public authority, you must:

1. Consider what you can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
2. Agree policies and specific objectives based on your consideration.
3. Act to deliver your policies and achieve your objectives.¹³

Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, all public bodies in Scotland are required to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their responsibilities.¹⁴ The Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) (Wales) Bill was formally introduced in the Senedd on 2 June 2025. It proposes embedding environmental principles into law,¹⁵ whilst Northern Ireland's new Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs Minister, Andrew Muir MLA, has spoken of the need to develop a new Biodiversity Strategy.¹⁶

Pursuant to the above requirements, local authorities across the UK look to their allotment sites as sources of biodiversity conservation and enhancement:



¹² [UK Biodiversity Framework](#)

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complying-with-the-biodiversity-duty>

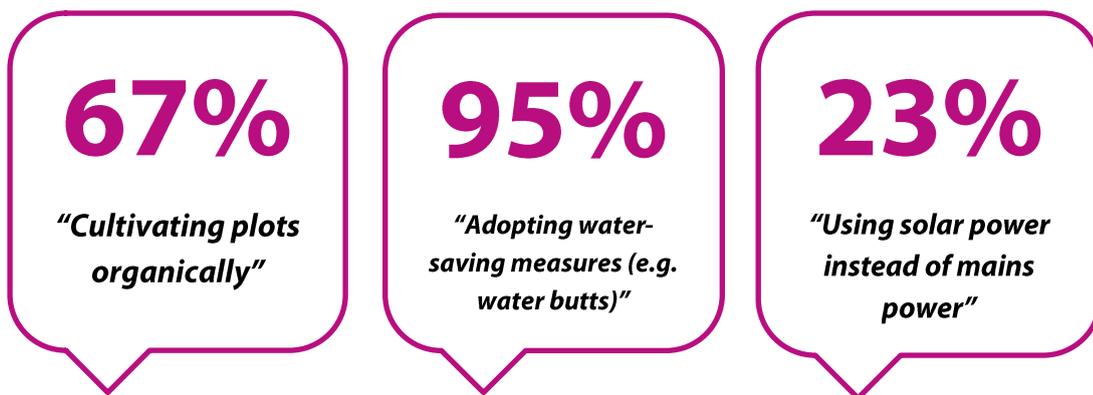
¹⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/biodiversity-duty-reporting-templates/>

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.wales/introduction-environment-principles-governance-and-biodiversity-targets-wales-bill>

¹⁶ <https://www.agendani.com/environment-minister-andrew-muir-mla-towards-a-strong-green-economy/>

The 2025 survey reveals that authorities continue to accelerate their biodiversity promotional activities among plot-holders. The steepest increase is in the promotion of planting pollinator-friendly species, which has risen by 15% since 2023 – an encouraging trend given the ongoing decline in UK pollinator habitats. There have also been notable increases in the number of authorities promoting native crops and establishing areas set aside for wildlife, further underscoring the sector’s growing commitment to ecological stewardship.

How is environmental sustainability promoted with regards to site management?



Environmental stewardship remains a core feature of allotment management. The overwhelming majority of authorities (95%) promote water-saving measures such as water butts, while 67% report encouraging organic cultivation. The use of solar power on sites – while still modest at 23% – has increased as councils explore low-carbon options.

Taken together, these actions underline allotments’ role as important urban green infrastructure delivering biodiversity, climate adaptation and community resilience benefits.

Glasgow City Council have led the way in raising awareness of how allotments can support wildlife in urban areas. More information about how the Council is influencing the behaviour and practices of plot-holders can be found [here](https://www.apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/news/articles/2020/biodiversity-and-allotments-gardening-in-harmony-with-nature/).¹⁷

¹⁷ <https://www.apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/news/articles/2020/biodiversity-and-allotments-gardening-in-harmony-with-nature/>

15 Conclusion

Nourishing the allotment service: A positive response to plot size adjustments amid acute demand for allotments

Allotments and community growing initiatives have a long-standing tradition in the United Kingdom, tracing back to the 19th century when they were first established to provide urban workers with access to green spaces and fresh produce. Today, their importance has transcended mere horticultural interests, encompassing environmental sustainability, social cohesion, physical and mental health, food security, education, and economic advantages. Evidence of allotments achieving greater prominence in the national debate can be found in the headlines it has generated in recent years across the print and broadcast media (see [1](#) for references).

In 2025, this visibility extended to a round of “Angela Rayner’s war on allotments” headlines – a story that attracted considerable attention despite being disconnected from the realities faced by most sites.¹⁸ Thankfully, allotment sales are protected by S.32 of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908¹⁹ with money raised having to go into new or improved allotments, with approved sales remaining low at 5-8 sites per annum against the overall numbers of sites remaining. Whilst the Allotment Act has historic regulatory powers they are nonetheless enduring in the protection of Allotments. However, vigilance and compliance must always be assured.

It is worth noting, as referenced above, the new National Planning Policy Framework (in England) provides opportunities for local authorities to consider allotments as part of their approach and similar measures apply in the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland, Planning Policy Wales (PPW) and Scottish Planning Policy (SSP). Rather than just maintaining existing sites, APSE would encourage all local authorities to consider the viability of new sites, particularly when looking at opportunities for new homes developments to support the Government’s ambitions to deliver 1.5 Million new homes.

APSE has long acknowledged and advocated for allotments to be considered vital components of a sustainable and resilient environment. One can now see this consideration reflected in the environmental programmes of all four UK administrations. We have also consistently highlighted their important role in supporting health and wellbeing, which is the theme of this year’s APSE Allotments Webinar.²⁰ The question is whether these commitments at a governmental level are translating into meaningful support and results on the ground; a question this survey is designed to answer.

¹⁸ <https://www.hortweek.com/no-evidence-angela-rayner-allotments-sell-off/parks-and-gardens/article/1927790>

¹⁹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Edw7/8/36>

²⁰ <https://www.apse.org.uk/index.cfm/apse/members-area/apse-networks/parks-horticulture-grounds-maintenance/upcoming-seminars/gloves-peas-and-harmony-local-authority-allotments-webinar-free-for-members/>

This survey has found the following:

1. Continued focus on plot size adjustments

Three-quarters of councils have downsized plots, making them more manageable for modern lifestyles and helping reduce waiting lists. Reductions in size are generally met with approval, both by new and existing holders. Smaller plots also create opportunities for a more diverse mix of tenants, including younger families and novice gardeners. Despite challenges with land scarcity, particularly in urban areas, this adaptability is likely essential for maintaining allotment interest across diverse demographic groups and changing urban landscapes.

2. Waiting times may be starting to plateau

While still high, the proportion of councils reporting waits over 18 months has fallen slightly, possibly reflecting the impact of smaller plot sizes and targeted new provision. This suggests that recent changes in how councils manage sites are beginning to ease pressure, though most waiting lists remain lengthy by historical standards. Continued monitoring will be essential to ensure these trends persist and to identify further opportunities to reduce waiting times.

3. Cost pressures are shifting services towards cost neutrality

Rising costs for allotment plots stem from higher maintenance and infrastructure expenses – such as water supply, fencing, pathways, and waste management – combined with local authority budget constraints. Many of these costs have risen above inflation, with councils forced to pass on increases to plot-holders through higher rents. While around two-thirds of services remain subsidised, more councils are attempting to move towards cost neutrality, covering funding gaps by adjusting rental charges. Even so, local authority plot rents generally remain much lower than private alternatives, offering very good value for money.

4. Biodiversity actions are becoming embedded

APSE's latest poll with Survation found a plurality of people think their local council is best placed to implement practical steps to combat the effects of climate change in the local area.²¹ One of the foremost contributions of allotments and community gardens is their positive impact on the environment. This survey has found authorities are actively promoting pollinator-friendly planting, water conservation, and organic cultivation as standard practice. These measures not only support local ecosystems but also help position allotments as a key tool in meeting wider climate and nature recovery targets, including a reduction in food miles. Growing awareness and community engagement around these initiatives could enhance the environmental impact and social value of allotments.

²¹ <https://apse.org.uk/sites/apse/assets/File/Summary%20of%20APSE%20Survation%20poll.pdf>

5. Progress towards accessibility and inclusivity

A majority of authorities (57%) now provide provisions for people with disabilities, such as raised beds, accessible pathways and tailored plot allocations. Additionally, 60% of councils continue to offer concessionary pricing for vulnerable groups, including pensioners, people with disabilities, and those on income support. These efforts highlight councils' dedication to ensuring that allotments remain a resource for all community members, regardless of age, ability, or financial circumstances. This focus on inclusivity not only broadens participation but also reinforces the social value of allotments as spaces for health, wellbeing, and community cohesion.

Looking ahead, the challenge will be to sustain the environmental and social gains delivered by allotments while balancing financial sustainability and land pressures. Allotments play a vital role in promoting health and wellbeing, providing people with valuable opportunities for physical activity, stress relief, and social connection. This focus on wellbeing is especially timely, as it forms the theme of this year's National Allotments Week.²² Continued advocacy will be essential to ensure allotments remain protected and resourced as part of the UK's green infrastructure.

²² <https://thenas.org.uk/national-allotments-week>

How can APSE help?

All APSE members can sign up to APSE's Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance Advisory Group network, which is an online network providing four learning events across the year, with expert speakers from across local government and the wider parks and greenspace sector. You can sign up to the network using [this link](#).

14.1 Training

APSE Training has also designed a special interactive online course for those who work in allotment services:

- **Managing Allotments in Local Authorities** - This course provides an introduction to the key issues and principles of allotment management. If you are looking to move towards a more senior position, or you want to grow the skills to understand, develop, and cope with the demands faced by managers, this course will provide a robust overview. You can book your place on the course [here](#).

14.2 Benchmarking for your parks service

APSE Performance Networks is the largest voluntary public sector benchmarking organisation in the UK. With over 200 authorities in membership, Performance Networks assists local councils by:

- Demonstrating progression on carbon reduction/ecological actions
- Helping to set a clear baseline on which competitiveness, efficiency and value for money can be measured in a systematic manner.
- Identifying the impact of service changes and interventions for your own local authorities and for others.
- Assessing the quality, cost and competitiveness of the services that councils provide on a regular basis.
- Helping to report data in meaningful ways to both elected members and the public.
- Identifying direction of travel and pace of change with regard to service delivery.
- Identifying inefficiencies such as poor productivity and high cost.
- Supporting service improvement through process benchmarking and sharing best practice examples.

For more information about how your greenspace service can benefit from Performance Networks membership, click [here](#).

Sign up for APSE membership to enjoy a whole range of benefits

APSE member authorities have access to a range of membership resources to assist in delivering council services. This includes our regular advisory groups, specifically designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, together with trade union representatives to discuss service specific issues, innovation and new ways of delivering continuous improvement. The advisory groups are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

Advisory groups are a free service included as part of your authority's membership of APSE and all end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE advisory group meetings and would like to be added to our list of contacts for your service area please email enquiries@apse.org.uk.

Our national advisory groups include:-

- FM and Building Cleaning
- Catering (School Meals)
- Cemeteries and Crematoria
- Highways and Street Lighting
- Housing, Construction and Building Maintenance
- Social Value, Procurement and Commercialisation Network
- Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance
- Renewables and Climate Change
- Roads, Highways and Street Lighting
- Sports and Leisure Management
- Vehicle Maintenance and Transport
- Veterans and Military Champions Network
- Local Government Reorganisation Network
- Waste Management, Refuse Collection and Street Cleansing

Visit www.apse.org.uk for more details.



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Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

10 March 2026



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A strategy for Reading 2026 – 2031
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Melissa Wise – Executive Director for Communities and Adult Social Care
Report author	Verena Hutcheson – Rough Sleeping Initiatives Manager Emma Tytel – Rent Guarantee Scheme Manager
Lead Councillor	Cllr Matt Yeo
Council priority	Safeguard & support the health & wellbeing of Reading's adults & children
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That HNL Committee approve the publication of <i>Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A strategy for Reading 2026 – 2031</i> and accompanying Action Plan; and 2. That HNL Committee agree annual updates on delivery against the Strategy and accompanying Action Plan be brought back to the Committee for review.

1. Executive Summary

1.1. This report seeks approval for the *Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A strategy for Reading 2026 – 2031*, along with its accompanying Action Plan. The draft Strategy sets out the Council's proposed approach to homelessness and rough sleeping over the next five years. It focuses on three key priorities:

- (1) intervene early in preventing homelessness and rough sleeping;
- (2) break the cycle of homelessness and rough sleeping when prevention has not been possible; and
- (3) make sure everyone can access safe, settled, and affordable housing.

1.2. The Strategy has an accompanying Action Plan which outlines how the Strategy will be delivered (attached at Appendix 2).

2. Policy Context

2.1 The Council's response to homeless households is underpinned by Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. The Act provides the statutory framework for local authority action to prevent homelessness and provides assistance to people threatened with homelessness or actually homeless. The Housing Act 1996 was amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.

- 2.2 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 reformed England's homelessness legislation by placing duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas. The duties include:
- An enhanced prevention duty extending the period of being threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days, meaning that housing authorities are required to work with people to prevent homelessness at an earlier stage.
 - A new duty to support households for 56 days to relieve their homelessness by helping them to secure accommodation.
 - Provision of services to all those affected by homelessness, not just those who are defined as having a priority need under the Housing Act 1996.
- 2.2.1 National legislation sets limits on the support that can be offered to individuals who are not eligible for public funds. The Council works within these legal parameters while continuing to provide advice and proportionate assistance. Engagement with signposting and support for people experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping remains voluntary.
- 2.3 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 amends Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 in relation to the support available to victims of domestic abuse. The Act extends priority need to all eligible victims of domestic abuse who are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse. The 2021 Act brings in a new definition of domestic abuse which housing authorities must follow to assess whether an applicant is homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse.
- 2.4 Section 1(1) of the Homelessness Act 2002 gives housing authorities the power to carry out a homelessness review for their area and to formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of that review. Section 1(4) requires housing authorities to publish a new homelessness strategy, based on the results of a further homelessness review, within the period of five years.
- 2.5 Under section 182(1) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) housing authorities are required to have regard to the accompanying statutory *Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities* in exercising their functions relating to homelessness and prevention of homelessness. The Code of Guidance stipulates under *Chapter 2: Homelessness strategies and reviews* that:
- 2.5.1 A review of homelessness and formulating a new strategy needs to consider the additional duties introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- 2.5.2 A homelessness review should include: (a) the levels, and the likely future levels, of homelessness in their district; (b) the activities which are carried out in preventing homelessness, securing accommodation and providing support for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness; and (c) the resources available to the housing authority and related support services in undertaking prevention and relief of homelessness duties.
- 2.5.3 Housing authorities must consult public or local authorities, voluntary organisations, or other persons as they consider appropriate before adopting or modifying a homelessness strategy. They will also wish to consult with service users and specialist agencies that provide support to homeless people in the district.
- 2.5.4 For the strategy to be effective, housing authorities must ensure it is consistent with other local plans and developed with, and supported by, all relevant local authority departments and partners.
- 2.5.5 The strategy should link with other strategies and programmes that aim to address the wide range of factors that could contribute to homelessness in the local area including aspects of local health, justice, or economic policy.

- 2.5.6 Housing authorities should consider the benefits of cross-boundary co-operation and a coherent approach to tackling homelessness with neighbouring authorities.
- 2.5.7 The strategy is co-ordinated with the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and the review of homelessness informs and is informed by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.
- 2.5.8 To be effective, the Council's homelessness strategy needs to be based on realistic assumptions and be developed and owned jointly with partners who will be responsible for its delivery where sections 1(5) and (6) of the Homelessness Act 2002 require housing and social services authorities to take the homelessness strategy into account when exercising their functions.
- 2.5.9 Section 3(4) of the Homelessness Act 2002 provides that a housing authority cannot include in a homelessness strategy any specific action expected to be taken by another body or organisation without their approval.
- 2.5.10 Housing authorities must keep their homelessness strategy under review and may modify it accordingly following appropriate consultation.
- 2.6 Local authorities are not required by legislation to have a rough sleeping strategy. However, if they are in receipt of grant funding from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to deliver services that relieve and prevent rough sleeping, it is considered best practice to have a relevant strategy and action plan. The MHCLG recommend that local authorities combine their strategies to align funding streams and priorities and reduce the potential for silos in strategic and operational decision making.
- 2.7 The *National Plan to End Homelessness*, a joint national homelessness and rough sleeping strategy, was published in England in December 2025 and outlines a cross-government strategy built on five pillars:
- *Universal prevention* – tackle root causes (e.g. build 1.5 million homes, reform the private rented sector, tackle poverty).
 - *Targeted prevention* – support those at higher risk, with duties on public services to identify and act regarding homelessness prevention (Duty to Collaborate).
 - *Preventing crisis* – provide early intervention to help people stay housed.
 - *Improving emergency responses* – phase out unlawful B&B use, enhance temporary accommodation quality.
 - *Recovery and preventing repeat homelessness* – ensure no one experiences homelessness more than once, halve long-term rough sleeping.

3. The Proposal

Current Position:

- 3.1. Reading's Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2020 – 2025 and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2024 set clear priorities around early intervention, tackling repeat homelessness, and increasing access to suitable accommodation. The strategies were overseen through established governance structures and delivered a range of successes, including expanded supported accommodation, improved data insight, strengthened prevention pathways, and enhanced joint work with statutory and voluntary partners — while also highlighting ongoing challenges such as affordability pressures, rising demand, and increased use of temporary accommodation. As part of the development of the proposed new *Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A strategy for Reading 2026 – 2031* (attached at Appendix 1), a detailed assessment of achievements to date was completed (attached at Appendix 3).

3.2. To inform the new Strategy, a comprehensive Needs Analysis, as set out in Appendix 4, was completed. The Needs Analysis shows continued population growth, increasing housing costs and sustained pressure on both temporary accommodation and homelessness prevention services. Below is a summary of key statistics:

3.2.1 Continued population growth

- Reading's population grew by 11.9% between 2011 and 2021 and reached 174,820 in 2022 – a faster rate of growth than both the South East (7.5%) and England overall (6.6%).
- The Borough has seen a rise in larger households, with 40.2% of households comprising three or more people, compared to 35.9% nationally, increasing demand for family-sized accommodation which is harder to source.

3.2.2 Rising housing costs and decreasing affordability

- Housing affordability in Reading has decreased significantly, with average house prices now exceeding ten times local earnings, well above affordability thresholds.
- The average private rent in Reading reached £1,543 per month in June 2025, representing a 9% annual increase and placing Reading among the most expensive private rental markets in the South East, with one of the fastest rates of rent growth.
- Private renters in Reading spend an average of 35.3% of their gross income on rent, and for many low-income households, around 70% of rent is not covered by Local Housing Allowance, leaving monthly shortfalls of £300 – £600 depending on property size.
- Only 16% of all dwellings in Reading are social or affordable housing, while demand continues to rise, limiting genuinely affordable options and increasing reliance on the private rented sector.

3.2.3 Sustained pressure on temporary accommodation and homelessness prevention services

- In Q4 2024/25, 397 households (62% of all households assessed) were owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty, indicating a sustained level of demand for early intervention and statutory homelessness support and services throughout the year. This is consistent with patterns seen across the South East and Reading's statistical nearest neighbour authorities.
- The private rented sector remains a key point of pressure, with the end of Assured Shorthold Tenancies accounting for 376 cases (around 36% of all homelessness prevention cases) in 2023/24, alongside a significant number of households seeking assistance after informal arrangements with family or friends could no longer be sustained.
- Demand for social housing continues to exceed available supply, with 4,675 households registered by July 2025 and 374 households (under 9%) housed during 2024/25, meaning move-on options remain limited for some households in temporary accommodation.

3.3. A comprehensive review of former strategies and the Needs Analysis reinforce that homelessness cannot be addressed in isolation or within single agency silos. The draft 2026 – 31 Strategy deliberately builds a narrative before introducing priorities to provide contextual explanation in support of combining Reading's homelessness and rough

sleeping strategies and ensuring that the priorities are justified, transparent, and rooted in context and review. The draft Strategy retains the core priorities of early prevention, breaking the cycle of homelessness, and improving access to suitable housing – all of which were strongly endorsed through consultation. Compared to the previous strategies the new Strategy and accompanying Action Plan (attached at Appendix 2) advance these priorities in several ways, including:

- **A broader system-wide approach**, designed to be transformational and aligned with direction from MHCLG advisers and the statutory *Homelessness Code of Guidance*.
 - **A strengthened focus on dignity, equality and inclusion**, reflecting Reading's wider corporate commitments and best practice observed in other local authority strategies.
 - **Close alignment with the *National Plan to End Homelessness***, including emphasis on shared responsibility across sectors, lived experience involvement, and the emerging Duty to Collaborate.
 - **Full integration of homelessness and rough sleeping within a single strategic framework**, replacing the previous standalone Rough Sleeping Strategy.
 - **Use of up-to-date evidence and national policy changes within the Strategy**, supported by the comprehensive Needs Analysis.
 - **Enhanced governance, accountability and long-term planning**, ensuring clearer oversight and measurable progress over the life of the Strategy.
- 3.4. Full public and stakeholder consultation was undertaken throughout July and August 2025, as detailed in Section 6 below, to help shape the draft Strategy. The proposed priorities and principles based on the previous strategy learnings and Needs Analysis met with broad support, and consultation responses led to refinements of wording, provision of a rationale for each proposed priority and principle, and the addition of a glossary. Full details of the consultation and resulting changes are set out in Appendices 5 and 6. Further, non-statutory, consultation was conducted in December 2025 to gather insights from stakeholders and individuals with lived experience, which informed and shaped the Strategy's accompanying Action Plan.
- 3.5. The publication of the new *National Plan to End Homelessness* occurred during the consultation and drafting stages of the Strategy and Action Plan. The National Plan strongly reinforces the insights gathered from stakeholders, the public, and those with lived experience, confirming the relevance of our proposed approach. Only minor amendments were needed to align the Draft Strategy and Action Plan with the National Plan.
- 3.6 The finalised Strategy is a public-facing document that needs to be accessible – as endorsed by consultation feedback. The Draft Strategy has been professionally graphically designed to ensure readability, visual appeal, and compliance with corporate branding.
- 3.7 Delivery of the Strategy and accompanying Action Plan will be monitored through a dedicated tracking tool, with defined metrics drawn directly from the Action Plan outcomes. Progress will be reviewed annually by the Strategic Housing Board, and annual updates will be brought back to the HNL Committee to support Member scrutiny, transparency and continuous improvement.

Recommended Option

3.8 It is proposed that the draft *Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A strategy for Reading 2026 – 31* is approved for publication and the accompanying Action Plan is adopted.

3.9 **Priorities for the Strategy** are detailed below:

3.9.1 Priority 1: Intervening Early to Prevent Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

***Why:** By acting quickly to help people before they lose their home, we can reduce crisis, avoid long stays in emergency accommodation, with better outcomes for individuals and families.*

***How:** We will work closely with public services and community partners to help people at the first sign of housing instability, and we will find ways for those experiencing hidden homelessness to access services and support.*

3.9.2 Priority 2: Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

***Why:** Breaking the cycle helps people, especially children, stay healthy and builds safer, more welcoming communities. Listening and learning all the time helps us support people better and make sure everyone feels respected and understood. Helping with connected problems gives people a better chance to recover and stay stable long term.*

***How:** We will work with public sector and community groups to tackle root causes and reasons for repeat homelessness. We will provide advice and support in ways that our customers can access. We will ask for customer feedback and use this to improve all our services – including supported housing.*

3.9.3 Priority 3: Providing Access to Decent, Suitable and Sustainable Homes

***Why:** A home gives people the foundation they need to rebuild their lives, avoid crisis, and recover in the long term. By working creatively and in partnership we can help people access homes that meet our required standards and suit individual need.*

***How:** We will use new and existing social housing to meet homelessness needs in the best way. We will build stronger partnerships with landlords to increase housing supply. We will make sure everyone can get the right support to find, move into and keep a stable home. We will be creative, but open about the limits on housing choices – like costs, legislation, and what the market can offer – so people understand what is possible and avoid unnecessary frustration.*

3.10 Underpinning principles of the proposed new Strategy are:

3.10.1 Work together across services to give people better support

Strong partnerships between the Council, health services, probation, community groups, and national agencies like prisons and the Home Office help prevent homelessness and support recovery. By sharing information, coordinating referrals, and offering joined-up services we can make sure advice and support is tailored to each person's needs.

3.10.2 Work closely with charities, community groups, and faith organisations to support people facing homelessness

Local organisations play a vital role in preventing homelessness and helping people recover. We will agree shared values to align service objectives and activities – this will make sure everyone understands what each sector can and can't do. By improving coordination, facilitating access to funding, and learning from community-led models, we can make sure support is joined-up, inclusive, and reaches those who need it most.

3.10.3 Listen to people and use their experiences to shape services

People who've experienced homelessness know what works. By involving them from the start, improving communication and feedback, and making services easier to understand and access, we can build trust, reflect real customer journeys, and design services and support that truly meets people's needs.

3.10.4 Make sure everyone knows their role in preventing homelessness, so people get the help they need to stay housed

Homelessness isn't just a housing issue – it's linked to health, care, safety, and support. We will help other services and sectors understand, and act on, their role in preventing homelessness. A strategic approach will be adopted to ensure consistent outcomes for customers, reducing reliance on informal operational relationships. By joining up services like housing, social care, mental health, community safety, and education, and making everyone responsible for outcomes, we can offer better, more consistent support and stop people falling through gaps in provisions.

3.10.5 Find new and better ways to support people facing homelessness

We need to be creative and flexible in how we design services, using proven approaches and learning from what works elsewhere. We'll be ready to act quickly when funding or opportunities come up – always focusing on what's best for our customers. By working together across sectors, improving how we fund and commission services, and offering tailored housing and support options, we can make sure services and support meet people's needs in ways that make the best use of our funding.

3.10.6 Make sure everyone knows what help is available and how to get it

Services should be easy to find and understand – online and in person in the community. Clear, inclusive communication helps people access support, reduces stigma, and builds trust. By improving public awareness, tailoring services to different needs, and sharing success stories, we can make sure everyone can access the services they need.

3.10.7 Use data and insight to improve services and support

By understanding patterns and sharing information, we can better focus our efforts, target support, plan ahead, and make sure services work well for everyone. We'll use data and information responsibly and transparently – always being clear about how and why we are using it. We will use what we learn from people and services to focus on improving outcomes and making sure resources are used effectively where they'll make the biggest difference.

Other Options (considered but not recommended)

3.11 Not to have a rough sleeping strategy and/or not to combine the homelessness and rough sleeping strategies and/or not to have an accompanying action plan.

It is not a legislative requirement to have a rough sleeping strategy, nor is it required for a local authority to combine strategies. However, it is good practice for a local authority to be transparent and accountable regarding its strategic and operational direction for reducing rough sleeping. Combining Reading's homelessness and rough sleeping strategies provides cohesion across governance, strategy and action plans when preventing and relieving all homelessness and aligns with the approach adopted by the *National Plan to End Homelessness*. This combined approach offers overarching

efficiencies, especially where homelessness and rough sleeping responses require joint working with overlapping groups of partners.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

4.1. The Council Plan has established five priorities for the years 2025 – 28. These priorities are:

- Promote more equal communities in Reading
- Secure Reading's economic and cultural success
- Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce our carbon footprint
- Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children
- Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future

4.2. In delivering these priorities, we will be guided by the following set of principles:

- Putting residents first
- Building on strong foundations
- Recognising, respecting, and nurturing all our diverse communities
- Involving, collaborating, and empowering residents
- Being proudly ambitious for Reading

4.3. Full details of the Council Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the Council's website - [Council plan - Reading Borough Council](#). These priorities and the Council Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective, and economical.

4.4. This report's recommendation to agree the *Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A strategy for Reading 2026 - 2031* and accompanying Action Plan will improve services for residents. It will support the Council Plan objectives of promoting more equal communities in Reading and safeguarding and supporting the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children by:

- Working with partners to prevent homelessness.
- Developing approaches to ensure that health and wellbeing is considered across all policy areas.
- Tackling social and economic inequalities in partnership with the voluntary and community sector.
- Supporting those who need social care services to live as independently as possible in their homes with improved wellbeing.
- Working with our partners in health and the voluntary sector to provide support solutions for adults with complex health and social care needs to improve outcomes.

4.5. The Strategy also embodies the Directorate of Communities and Adult Social Care's common purpose of '*supporting the life that matters to you*' by ensuring the Strategy and Action Plan are designed in the spirit of person- centred, preventative, and empowering approaches.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

5.2. There are no environmental or climate implications arising from the report's recommendations.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. Full public and stakeholder consultation was undertaken throughout July and August 2025 to inform Reading's *Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A strategy for Reading 2026 – 2031*. Formal consultation feedback is summarised in Appendices 5 and 6.
- 6.2. Survey questions included the opportunity to ask the public and stakeholders how well they think the Council is delivering existing services against the proposed priorities and enquired what residents and partners think the Council does well and how it could improve strategic direction and service delivery.
- 6.3. Non-statutory consultation was undertaken with stakeholders and individuals with lived experience throughout December 2025 to inform and shape the Strategy's accompanying Action Plan.
- 6.4. In summary, the following groups were consulted in the following ways:
 - Online survey via the Council's Consultation Hub (Go Vocal) as an open public consultation.
 - Use of social media and Council internal communications (Intranet and Team Reading Newsletter) to promote the on-line survey.
 - Cross-sector workshops with informed and experienced partners (attached at Appendix 5).
 - Utilising the newly established lived experience forum (Shared Voice) to encourage and obtain feedback from those with lived experience via the survey and at the workshops.
 - Attending multiple cross-sector partnership meetings to promote the survey.
- 6.5. Overarching feedback from consultation has shaped the Strategy and associated Action Plan which is summarised as follows:
 - 6.5.1 **General agreement with priorities and principles**
 - Support for a cohesive approach to integrate homelessness and rough sleeping strategies.
 - Agreement that proposed priorities are strong and appropriately high-level.
 - Broad support for the principles, pending the detail of an action plan.
 - 6.5.2 **Most significant day-to-day concerns for partners in tackling homelessness and rough sleeping include:**
 - Housing affordability.
 - Housing availability and standards (especially within the private rented sector).
 - Health inequalities contributing to rough sleeping and homelessness.
 - Support services and move-on from supported accommodation.
 - Funding and resources.
 - Early traumatic experiences contributing to rough sleeping and homelessness.
 - Safeguarding responses to complex needs.
 - 6.5.3 **Further feedback themes:**
 - Improve clarity and communication – including providing definitions, reducing jargon, using Plain English.
 - Ensure implementation and actions stem from the Strategy – translating priorities and principles into tangible, visible actions and real outcomes for customers.
 - Improve funding and commit to sustained resourcing.
 - Challenge systemic and national policy barriers.

- Integrate the homelessness and rough sleeping strategy with other strategies.
 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) being at the strategy's core – including across language and delivery.
 - Ensure there is a collaborative strategic action plan – that is practical, realistic, and reflective of frontline challenges, as well as involving people with lived experience.
- 6.6 Consultation feedback has strongly influenced the final drafting of the Strategy and accompanying Action Plan.
- 6.6.1 A range of amendments were made to the strategy's priorities, including more emphasis on hidden homelessness, improving accessibility and person-centred language, further recognising cross sector roles and coordination, more emphasis upon respect and stability, and clarifying housing standards, partnerships, and realistic expectations; and
- 6.6.2 A range of amendments were made to the strategy's principles, including broadening partnership scope, sharpening the focus on prevention, recovery and lived experience, expanding innovation and responsiveness, enhancing inclusive communication and trust building, and clarifying the role of data, insight, and responsible information use.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2 A full Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) can be found at Appendix 7. It concludes that agreeing and delivering the Strategy will not have a negative differential impact on people with protected characteristics, these being: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender), sexual orientation and care experienced young people and adults, other than to recognise and target the specific needs of groups identified as being at particularly heightened risk of homelessness and/or rough sleeping due to their demography, geography or health and well-being needs.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1. There are no other relevant issues.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. Under Section 1(4) of the Homelessness Act 2002, it is a legal requirement for the Council to review, formulate, consult on, and publish a homelessness strategy every five years. The housing authority can choose to do this more frequently if circumstances in the area have changed. Section 1(5) requires the housing authority to take their homelessness strategy into account in the exercise of their functions.
- 9.2. The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government's *Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities* states that an effective action plan should be developed to ensure that the objectives set out in the homelessness strategy are achieved.

- 9.3. The amended *Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities* published in February 2018, under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, states that additional duties introduced through the 2017 Act should be incorporated into a housing authority's homelessness strategy. This should include the involvement of all relevant partners for earlier identification and intervention to prevent homelessness and establishing effective partnerships and working arrangements with agencies to facilitate appropriate duty to refer referrals.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1. This report proposes the approval of a new *Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A strategy for Reading 2026 - 2031* and accompanying Action Plan which, if agreed, will run parallel to legislation that outlines the Council's duties in preventing and relieving homelessness under the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- 10.2. The cost of these statutory duties will be met by Reading Borough Council's General Fund, with funds contributed from central government under Housing grants provided including Homelessness Prevention Grant. For 2025/26 RBC is receiving Housing Grants totalling £5.790m and in 2026/27 £6.920m. The Strategy and accompanying Action Plan are developed to ensure the best use of Council resources, offering value for money, and managing and minimising costs associated with the use of emergency and temporary accommodation, where these costs are a key financial risk to the Council. The Strategy and corresponding Action Plan are consistent with the Council's likely available resources to manage homelessness and rough sleeping over their proposed period.

11. Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1. **10 March 2026:** Endorsement and agreement of Strategy and Action Plan publication at HNL Committee.
- 11.2. **March 2026:** Publication of Strategy and adoption of Action Plan.
- 11.3. **April 2027:** First annual Action Plan review published.

12. Background Papers

- 12.1. There are none.

Appendices

- (1) **Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A strategy for Reading 2026 – 2031** sets out Reading Borough Council's three strategic priorities in tackling homelessness and rough sleeping in Reading. These priorities are underpinned by core values and seven principles which describe the ways the local authority intends to deliver the Strategy across Housing Needs services.
- (2) **Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: An action plan for Reading 2026 – 2031** which sets out clear actions, responsibilities, and timelines for how the Council will deliver its homelessness and rough sleeping strategy over the next five years.
- (3) **Review of Reading's previous Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies** which identifies lessons learned and informs the development of the new Strategy.
- (4) **Understanding Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in Reading: Strategic needs analysis** undertaken in July 2025 as required by the Homelessness Act 2002.

- (5) **Consultation Review and Outcomes** which summarises the public and stakeholder consultation exercise on proposed priorities and principles undertaken July – August 2025 as required by the Homelessness Act 2002.
- (6) **Online (Go Vocal) Consultation Responses Summary** which summarises the public and stakeholder consultation exercise on proposed priorities and principles undertaken July – August 2025 as required by the Homelessness Act 2002.
- (7) **Equality Impact Assessment: Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A strategy for Reading 2026-31**



Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A strategy for Reading 2026-2031

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Summary of our strategy

This strategy sets out Reading's plan to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping between 2026 and 2031. It aims to make homelessness rare, brief, and not something people experience again. We know that homelessness is not just about housing - it's also linked to health, money worries, trauma, and other life challenges.

The strategy builds on what we've already achieved and is shaped by local data, national policies, and feedback from people in Reading. It focuses on three main priorities: preventing homelessness early, breaking the cycle of repeat homelessness, and ensuring access to safe, settled, and affordable housing.

To make this happen, we need to work together – across council services, with local organisations, and with the people who use our services. We are committed to treating everyone with dignity, listening to lived experience, and making sure support is fair, joined up, and easy to access. This strategy is our shared plan to help people in Reading build safer, more stable futures.

A message from your Lead Councillor for Housing



Cllr Matt Yeo
Lead Councillor for Housing

I am pleased to introduce Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A strategy for Reading 2026 – 31 and Action Plan which sets out the Council's priorities to prevent homelessness and explains how we will invest in services to protect Reading's residents who are most vulnerable and in need of support.

Homelessness and rough sleeping are among the most urgent and complex challenges we face as a community. They are not just about bricks and mortar – they are about people's lives, their health, their dignity, and their futures. In Reading, we believe that everyone deserves a safe, stable place to call home, and that preventing homelessness is a shared responsibility across all sectors of our town.

This strategy sets out a bold and compassionate vision for Reading between 2026 and 2031. It builds on the progress we've made, listens to the voices of those with lived experience, and responds to the growing pressures facing our residents – from rising housing costs and health inequalities to the impact of national reforms and local demand.

We know that the causes of homelessness are complex, and the solutions must be equally so. That's why this strategy focuses on early intervention, breaking the cycle of repeat homelessness, and ensuring access to safe, settled, and affordable housing. It is rooted in dignity, inclusion, and partnership – values that reflect the very best of Reading.

I am proud of the work already being done by our Council teams, voluntary and faith organisations, and community partners. But we must go further. This strategy is our commitment to do just that – to work together, to innovate, and to make homelessness and rough sleeping rare, brief, and non-recurring. Thank you to everyone who contributed to shaping this strategy. Your insights, experiences, and dedication have made it stronger, fairer, and more focused on what matters most.

Together, we can build a Reading where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Introduction

Homelessness and rough sleeping reach far beyond not having a home. They affect every part of a person's life - including their physical health, mental wellbeing, and chances for a better future. These are not just housing problems; they are human problems, shaped by complex personal experiences and wider challenges in society.

Preventing homelessness is a key part of our strategy. People can become homeless for many different reasons. This is why our solutions must involve the whole council, working together across services, and in partnership with other sectors. Everyone deserves to be seen, listened to, and supported. Everyone deserves a voice in shaping their journey toward a safe, stable home.

“

There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in.

— *Desmond Tutu*

”



What we know about Reading

 **Reading is a growing and changing town.** Over the last 10 years our population increased by nearly 12%, reaching over 174,000 residents. We are growing faster than regional and national averages, and our population is changing. Reading's average age is younger than the South East and England, even though more residents are now living into older age. Family sizes and household types are changing, and demand for housing and support services is increasing.

 **Reading is becoming more diverse.** A growing number of our residents are identifying with a range of ethnic backgrounds and are born outside the UK. We are an inclusive town and there is a need for accessible and responsive services for all our communities.

 **Health outcomes in Reading vary across communities.** 50% of residents report being in very good health, but compared to other areas in England, our overall health score is in the bottom 30%. People who are homeless are more than twice as likely to say they have poor health or a disability. Issues like drug and alcohol use, and smoking, are still common and a cause for concern.

 **The cost-of-living crisis has deepened financial pressures across Reading.** Five small neighbourhoods in our town are among the 10% most disadvantaged in England. 1 in 6 children live in low-income families, and over 1 in 10 homes are overcrowded. These figures are higher than both the regional and national averages. Rising housing costs, energy bills, and inflation have increased the risk of homelessness for our residents.

 **Reading has strong economic growth and job opportunities.** Many of our residents have jobs and earn more than the national average, but not everyone is benefiting from this. More people are claiming benefits. Those in low-paid or unstable jobs are feeling the pressure most. 1 in 3 people who are homeless have no qualifications, which makes it harder for them to get jobs and improve their situation.

 **Housing in Reading is increasingly unaffordable.** Owning a home is becoming harder. House prices are ten times the average yearly income, making homeownership impossible for most. Renting privately has increased – it is expensive, and rents keep rising. The average rent is £1,552 per month, while the average full-time salary is £40,988 a year. After tax, this means people are spending over half (57%) of their take-home pay just on rent. 70% of rent for private tenants is not covered by housing benefit support (Local Housing Allowance), leaving low-income renters unable to pay their bills and at risk of arrears or losing their home. Only 1 in 6 homes in Reading are social or affordable housing, and demand far exceeds availability.

 **Reading's private rented sector is under growing pressure.** National programmes which rely upon a supply of properties from the private rented sector have increased competition for affordable homes. The Renters' Rights Act 2025 could result in some landlords deciding to stop renting out their properties. This would mean fewer homes available to rent.

Putting dignity at the centre of our strategy

This strategy is built on a strong commitment to dignity. Reading's Dignity Charter is more than a set of words - it's a promise to treat every person with respect, compassion, and fairness. The Charter includes 12 clear pledges that guide how we work. These pledges support a person-centred approach that values each person's individuality, protects privacy, encourages clear and inclusive communication and takes a zero-tolerance approach to abuse. These are not just ideals – they shape how we design and deliver services every day. The Charter inspires us to empower people with real choice and control over their lives. It reminds us that every interaction should be based on empathy and accountability. Our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-31 will put the Dignity Charter at its core. It has shaped our priorities, guided our principles, and drives our Action Plan – making sure dignity is not just something we talk about, but something we live by in every service we provide.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in homelessness services

Reading Borough Council is committed to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). This means making sure our homelessness services are not only effective, but also fair and inclusive for everyone. We want every resident – especially those from protected or marginalised groups – to get support that meets their individual needs. This includes people of different races, genders, ages, and abilities. We use Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) to help us understand how our housing policies affect different people. This helps us identify and remove barriers – whether they come from complex needs, language differences, or lack of access to digital services – so that no one is excluded from receiving the service they need.

We are committed to using inclusive language that respects people's identities. This means avoiding labels or assumptions, challenging stereotypes and recognising the diversity of people who experience homelessness. We know it takes courage to ask for help and this strategy is not about ticking boxes or making assumptions – it is about seeing people as individuals first, not defining them by their housing situation.

EDI is at the heart of our work – from how we design services to how we communicate. We aim to create services that are accessible, compassionate, equitable and empowering. We understand that preventing homelessness means more than providing shelter. It means understanding the inequalities that lead to housing insecurity. That's why we design our services to reflect our diverse community, and make sure we work in ways which are sensitive to different cultures. This helps build long-term resilience to prevent the cycle of homelessness.



Putting our customers at the heart of service and processes

We will create services that are easy to access, inclusive, and shaped by people with lived experience of homelessness. We are committed to making things simpler – reducing unnecessary processes and avoiding people being passed between teams. By tailoring services to individual needs, we make sure that everyone has fair access to the support they need. We will actively involve customers in shaping services and policies. Feedback will be built into everything we do, so we can keep learning and improving. We will use data in smart ways to help us deliver better services and outcomes - making sure our support is effective, efficient, and focused on what matters most to people who use our services.

Adopting a whole-system approach

Tackling homelessness and rough sleeping is about more than providing 'bricks and mortar'. It involves a coordinated response that supports people with a wide range of needs, helping them move towards long-term recovery and stability in all aspects of their life. Strong collaboration and strategic integration are important to make sure that homelessness awareness is part of every policy and service area – not just housing. By improving how we communicate, increasing visibility, and sharing responsibility across teams and other organisations, we can build a culture where everyone works together and delivers support in a consistent and coordinated way – making homelessness everyone's business, and lasting change everyone's goal.



How your feedback shaped our strategy

To make sure our consultation was inclusive, we spoke with a wide range of people over six weeks – from 2 July to 10 August 2025. We heard from residents across Reading, people using Housing Needs services, Council teams and other public services, Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector organisations (VCFS), local businesses and commissioned homelessness service providers. We used different ways to gather feedback, including a self-completion survey on the Go Vocal platform, several key stakeholder workshops, drop-in sessions and outreach from VCFS partners to make sure customer voices were heard. This approach helped us hear from a diverse range of voices, making sure the strategy reflects real experiences and local needs.

What we heard from the consultation

During the consultation, several clear themes came through. People told us that preventing and responding to homelessness and rough sleeping has many challenges, including pressures in the housing market, health and wellbeing inequalities, gaps in how services work together and limited resources. These issues are all connected – and together, they shape people’s real-life experiences of homelessness.

Housing affordability, availability and standards

You told us that:

- Affordability of housing remains one of the most significant barriers to preventing homelessness.
- Rising rents and limited access to genuinely affordable housing, especially social housing, have created a situation where many households struggle to find or keep a home.
- In the private rented sector, some landlords do not follow the legislation that protects tenants from being evicted illegally.

Health inequalities and trauma

You told us that:

- Health inequalities are a major contributing factor to homelessness and rough sleeping.
- Individuals experiencing homelessness often face several serious health challenges, including untreated mental health conditions, problems with alcohol or drugs and long-term physical conditions.
- Experiences like abuse, neglect, or family breakdown can cause deep trauma – and this can make people more vulnerable to housing problems later in life.
- Using trauma-informed approaches helps services respond with care and understanding – and makes it easier to identify early signs, offer support sooner, and help people begin their recovery.

Support services and move-on pathways

You told us that:

- Supported accommodation plays an important role in helping people feel more stable and secure. However, moving on from support into independent living can be a difficult and uncertain step for many.
- When there aren’t enough suitable housing options for people to move on from supported accommodation – and when ongoing support is missing – it can lead to people becoming homeless again or cause delays for others waiting for these services.
- For people at risk of, or sleeping rough, long-term recovery depends on different services – like housing, health, and social care – working closely together in a joined-up way.

Funding and resources

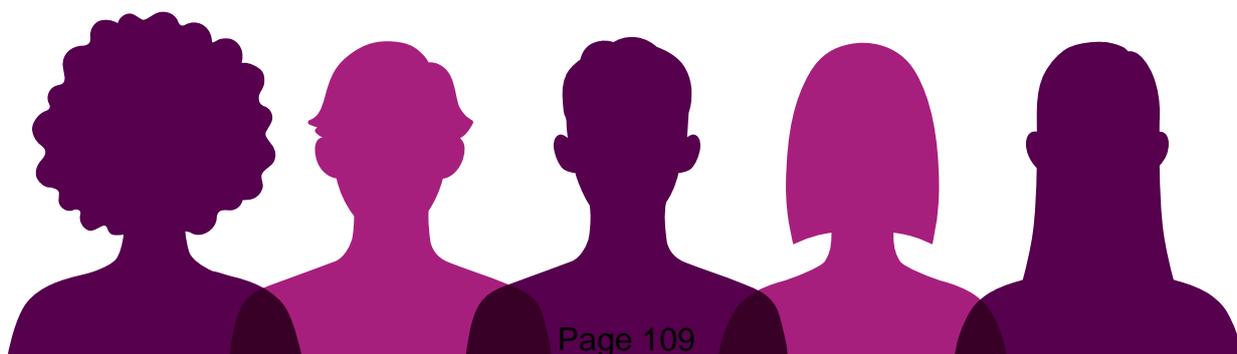
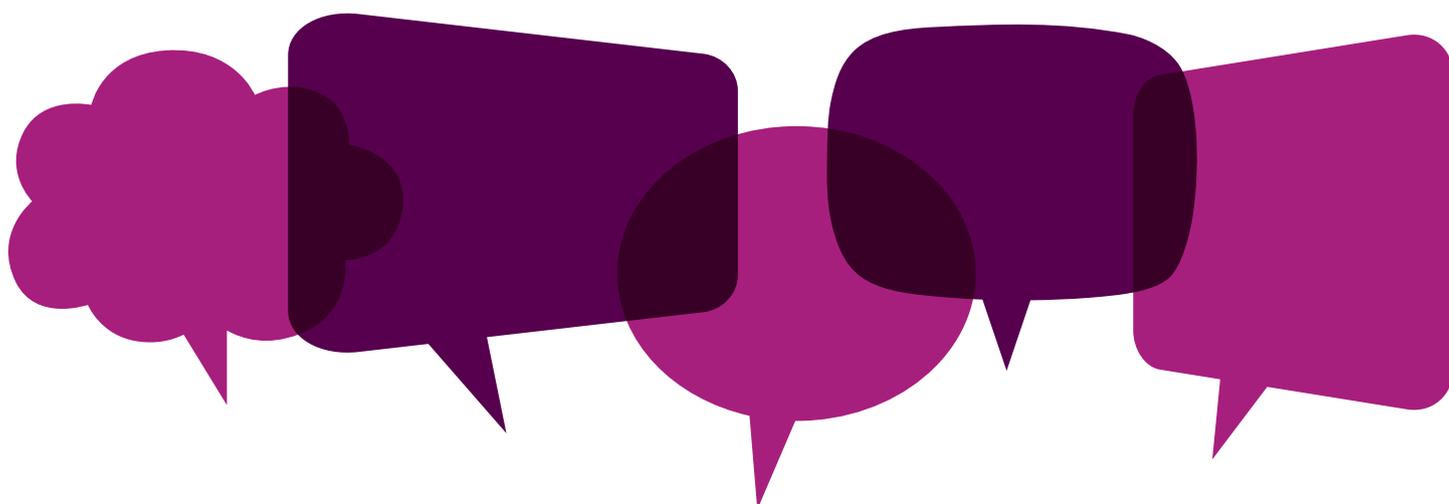
You told us that:

- A lack of funding and resources continues to be a challenge for both statutory services and voluntary organisations working to support people facing homelessness.
- Funding for services is often short-term and not enough to meet increasing demand. This makes it harder for services to try new approaches, adapt to changing needs and build long-term, sustainable support solutions for people.
- Cuts to funding and ongoing uncertainty put extra strain on frontline workers. Low wages in the support sector and short-term contracts make it harder to attract and keep skilled staff.

Safeguarding and complex needs

You told us that:

- Safeguarding needs to change to better support people who are homeless. It should reflect the complex realities people face and offer the right kind of help. This means understanding how mental health, neurodiversity, trauma and unstable housing all can be connected.
- Many people who are homeless have complex needs but are not assessed as qualifying for formal safeguarding or social care support. Even though they do not meet the usual thresholds, their situations clearly show they are at risk, and they need help and protection.
- A more joined up and thoughtful approach to safeguarding is needed. This includes better sharing of information between organisations and building trust across different sectors. It means using safeguarding to offer early support and to help people stay in their homes – not letting it be a barrier that stops people from getting help.



Our achievements

We have made strong progress in tackling homelessness and rough sleeping.

Two key plans – the Preventing Homelessness Strategy (2020-25) and the Rough Sleeping Strategy (2019-24) – have helped us improve services and support. These strategies have led to better partnerships between organisations, smarter use of data to understand local needs, and more effective help for people in need. Challenges still exist, but these strategies have put us in a good place to keep making progress and to continue improving the lives of Reading’s residents, especially those most at risk.

Progress from Reading’s Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2020 – 2025

Priority to intervene early to prevent and reduce homelessness



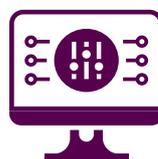
Ran a six-month pilot to focus on preventing homelessness and helping people earlier and supporting them to move on from temporary accommodation.



Launched the “Click Before You Evict” website to help landlords and tenants avoid evictions.



Used better data tools (like the LIFT dashboard from Policy in Practice) to identify households at risk of homelessness sooner and offer help.



Started improving digital services by introducing the Housing Online platform.



Created a main contact person in the homelessness advice service for young people and those with mental health needs – this makes it easier to refer and provide tailored support.



Introduced Power BI to track key data and look at trends more easily.



Improved online access with tools in different languages, self-service options, and helpful videos.

Priority to support people who are vulnerable to recurring homelessness



Helped people stay in their homes by improving rent support and offering further incentives through the Rent Guarantee Scheme (RGS).



Improved access to housing for care leavers and improved planning with Children's Social Care and other services for housing and life after care.



Transferred emergency accommodation procurement to the RGS team, improving quality and value for money.



Made sure homelessness services are part of key meetings with other agencies to support access to the right services, especially people with complex needs – including meetings like MARAC (for domestic abuse), MAPPA (for people who may pose a risk), Safeguarding Adults Board, and the Complex Adults Panel.



Set up expert advice teams to support ex-offenders, refugees and asylum seekers.

Priority to increase access to decent, suitable accommodation



Updated our application and assessment process for social housing – called an Allocations Scheme – with a specific housing register to better match adapted homes with people who need them.



Trialled procuring several units of emergency accommodation (block-booking) through 12 months contracts to lower costs and improve quality.



The team that assesses and approves Disabled Facilities Grants is now part of Housing Needs.



Increased temporary accommodation by buying properties through the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) – a government fund – which has helped support Afghan families who are resettling in Reading.



Built new homes and secured rental properties - under the Build-to-Rent scheme - to increase options for homeless households.



Improved support for landlords by holding events to help them understand new laws and offering better incentives to take our homeless households as tenants.



Secured £2 million a year since 2021 to help fund new housing and support services. This money comes from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Centre for Homelessness Impact (CHI).



A pilot project and support worker helped non-UK nationals and people with limited access to public funds get support with their immigration status and then housing.



Added 87 new bed spaces for people with complex needs by developing the Caversham Road Pods, the Nova Project, and expanding the Housing First programme.



Improved data collection and a dedicated Data and Evaluation Lead helped inform service development and identify unknown people sleeping rough.



The Accommodation for Ex-Offenders project received over 200 referrals and created more than 50 private rental tenancies for those leaving prison.



Better data collection and a dedicated data lead helped shape how support is delivered.



Expanded our outreach and tenancy support teams to include help outside normal working hours and staff who specialise in complex cases.



Tap for Reading was launched as a safe way to donate to help people who are homeless. It is supported by stronger public messaging, promotion of StreetLink, and better coordination between services as part of Reading's overall Homelessness Partnership (HoP).

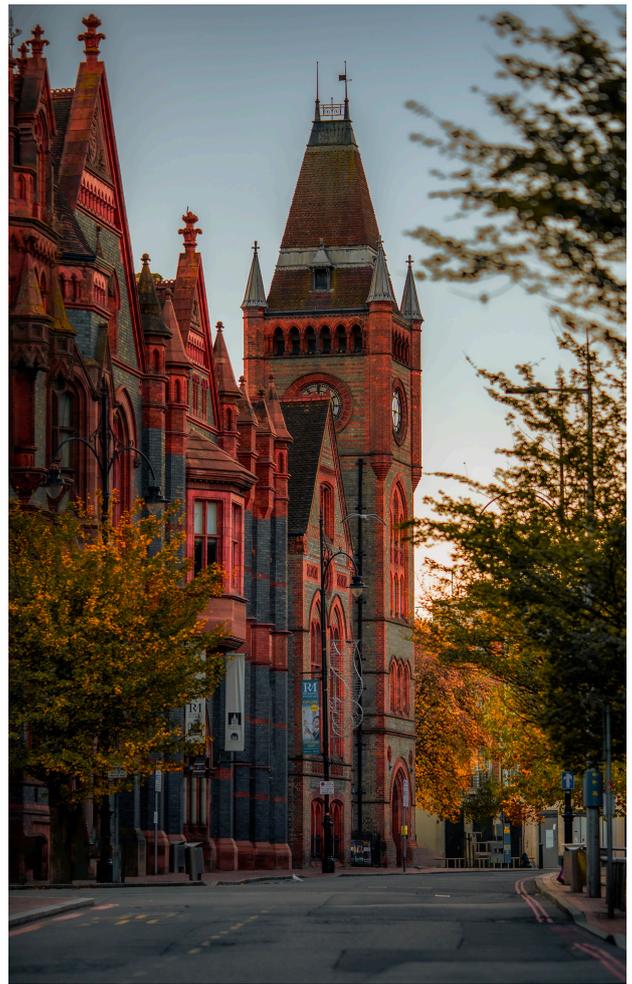


Willow House continued to offer some emergency bed spaces with 24 hours support. An emergency bed – a crash pad – is now available at the Reading YMCA for young people. New options like NAPpads are being considered to give more people a safe place to stay off the streets.

What Reading does to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping

All the Council's homelessness services work together as one joined-up system. They provide the right support for people with a wide range of needs when they are homeless or at risk of losing their home. These services not only meet legal duties, but try to prevent homelessness early, support people in crisis, and help them move on to a home.

The Council provides support under the Homelessness Reduction Act, which means helping people stay in their homes or find somewhere else to live. Everyone who asks for help from the Homelessness Prevention team gets a Personalised Housing Plan, and those in urgent need, who meet priority need criteria, can access emergency accommodation. The Council works closely with other services – like health, probation, children's services and adult social care – to identify people at risk before they reach crisis point. When temporary housing is needed, the Council uses a mix of purpose-built accommodation, which are supported by staff and used flexibly to meet demand. A pilot launched in 2025 has created specialist teams focused on early intervention, prevention, and helping people move out of temporary accommodation more quickly.



The Council funds over 290 bed spaces of supported housing. This includes services for women, young people, couples, people with a history of offending and those with complex needs. Outreach teams work on the streets to connect people with support, and emergency beds are available during cold weather or heatwaves - to save lives, even if someone is from out of area. Tenancy sustainment and employment support are provided through the Council commissioned Floating Support Service.

Reading helps people access the private rented sector through its long-running Rent Guarantee Scheme. This offers landlords guaranteed rent and support, while tenants get help with deposits, budgeting, and finding homes. The scheme has been successful in preventing homelessness and reducing the need for emergency accommodation.

For those waiting for social housing, the Council runs the Homechoice at Reading scheme. To help free up bigger homes for families, the Council offers incentives for tenants to downsize, and it also sets aside homes for vulnerable groups under a quota queue policy. People with disabilities can apply for Disabled Facilities Grants to make their homes safer and more accessible.

Understanding homelessness locally: Our challenges

Our main challenges to preventing and relieving homelessness and delivering high quality services are:

1. A lack of genuinely affordable housing

Many people cannot find or keep a home because rents are high, social housing is limited, and private renting is becoming harder to access.

In Reading:

- **40% of households are larger than the national average**, showing a growing need for bigger homes.
- **50% of households owned their home in 2021** – lower than the national average of 61% and the South East average of 66%. Rising house prices mean homes now cost more than 10 times the average income, making it harder for many people to afford to buy.
- **1 in 3 households rented privately in 2021** – up from 1 in 4 in 2011. By June 2025, average rents had risen to £1,543 per month, making renting unaffordable for many people.
- **Fewer than 1 in 10 households on our Housing Register were offered a home in 2024/25**, and only **16% of all homes are social or affordable housing**, showing a big gap between need and what is available.
- **Only 1 in 5 new properties built in 2023/24 were affordable homes.**

2. The gap between benefit support and rising housing costs

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) has not kept up with rising rents, making it harder for low-income households to find or keep affordable private rented homes, even with Council support. This gap between housing costs and income puts more people at risk of eviction or homelessness.

In Reading:

- **Average private rents are much higher than LHA rates** – by £316 per month for shared rooms and £618 for 3-bed homes – making it hard for low-income households to afford a place to live.
- **673 households are affected by the benefit cap**, which limits support unless someone earns over £722 a month. This makes having a job key to keeping a home.
- **£1.6m in rent arrears was owed by tenants at the end of 2023/24** – with 19 mortgage possession claims by mid-2025, showing the financial pressure many households are facing.
- **79 landlord possession claims were recorded in mid-2025** – twice as many as the South East average – showing growing pressure on renters and high levels of private rented evictions.

3. Social and financial pressures are increasing homelessness risk

Health issues, low pay, lack of qualifications, and rising living costs – like food, energy and transport – are making it harder for people to keep their home. These pressures increase the risk of homelessness and make it harder for us to prevent.

In Reading:

- **30% of people who were homeless had no qualifications**, compared to 19% of the general population – showing how lack of education can increase the risk of homelessness.
- **44% of homeless households said they had a disability** – more than twice the national average.
- **Five small neighbourhoods are among the most deprived 10% in England.** Overall, Reading ranks 141st out of 317 councils for deprivation.



4. Rising demand from increasingly diverse and vulnerable households

More people with different or complex needs require homelessness support in Reading. This includes larger families, single people, and those with poor physical or mental health – highlighting the need for our services to respond to a wide range of situations.

In Reading:

- **397 households needed homelessness support between January and the end of March 2025 – 142 were already homeless and 195 were at risk.** These numbers are higher than the regional average, showing ongoing pressure on housing.
- **729 single men, 524 single women and 178 female lone parents were owed a housing duty in 2023/24.** Demand from single people and single-parent families is increasing.
- **Nearly half (49%) of people we helped with homelessness in 2024/25 were White, while 17% were Black and 16% were Asian.** Ethnically diverse communities are increasingly affected by homelessness in Reading.
- **17% of people who needed homelessness support had mental health needs in 2022/23** – the most common type of support needed – **and 14% had physical health issues.** Many also faced challenges like substance misuse, domestic abuse, repeat homelessness, or difficulty finding work.

5. More people are sleeping rough for longer or returning to the streets after being housed

There has been an increase in numbers of people sleeping rough in Reading. Many are struggling to move off the streets. Some face serious challenges like poor mental health, substance use, and neurodivergent conditions that are often undiagnosed. Others have no local connection or unresolved immigration status, which limits their access to support and accommodation. Many have lost previous housing due to rent arrears or difficulty managing a tenancy, and some have recently left prison, hospital, or asylum accommodation without a clear plan. Often, people face several of these issues at once, increasing their risk of long-term or repeat homelessness.

In Reading:

- **81 people were sleeping rough each month, with 43 people on a typical night** (October 2024 - March 2025).
- **More people sleep rough, per 100,000 people, than in similar areas** – although other places have higher overall numbers.
- **Over 50% of people in 2024 rough sleeping snapshot were either ineligible for support due to immigration issue or not engaging with reconnection efforts** – leaving a large number of people without options to come off the streets.
- **50% of people sleeping rough in early 2025 were on the streets for over 10 nights, often across multiple months** – showing persistent and harder to resolve rough sleeping.
- **326 new referrals in 2024/25 were made for supported accommodation** that meets the needs of people at risk of, or rough sleeping. Greatest demand was for high needs support and from single males, aged 30 – 49 with UK National status.

6. Services, partners and the public not knowing when, how or where to get homelessness support

Everyone needs to notice early signs that someone might become homeless – even when those signs aren't obvious. They should know when and how to refer people for help and how they can support the Council's prevention efforts.

In Reading:

- It's still a challenge to make sure the public and partner organisations understand what causes homelessness, what support is available, and how to refer people for help. Without clear and consistent communication, it's harder to act early and work together to prevent homelessness.
- Referrals from prisons, rehabilitation services, and hospitals are lower than in other areas of the South East. This shows a need for better joint working to make sure people get help before becoming homeless.
- Local data doesn't fully reflect the needs of some groups at higher risk of homelessness – like care leavers, veterans, people leaving hospital or prison, survivors of domestic abuse, refugees, people fleeing conflict, those experiencing hidden homelessness, LGBTQ+ individuals, and neurodiverse young people. National evidence and local feedback show these groups are often missed in referrals, do not approach services at all, or when they do, this is not recorded properly.

7. No shared obligation to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping

Homelessness is often caused by a combination of issues like poor mental health, domestic abuse, poverty, and challenges linked to migration. Tackling these root causes requires joined up working across different services and departments.

In Reading:

- There is no clear, shared responsibility across Council teams, local services, or community partners to spot the signs of homelessness early, take action, or work together. This makes it harder to prevent people from losing their homes.
- Different departments and services have their own legal responsibilities, priorities and day-to-day pressure which can make it harder to work together. When support is not joined up, people with multiple vulnerabilities can miss out on the help they need to avoid homelessness.
- People who are homeless or rough sleeping often face serious risks. Self-neglect, being excluded from services and failures in joined up working may mean they do not get the help they need. Missed opportunities to act, especially for people with multiple vulnerabilities who have care and support needs, can lead to serious harm.



8. Growing pressure on homelessness services and Council budgets

More people are turning to the Council for homelessness support, but funding is reducing. Staff are managing bigger caseloads and more complex needs, while the use of temporary accommodation continues to grow. At the same time, rising costs – for housing, inflation, and basic living – are making it harder to prevent homelessness. New laws, like changes to private renting and duties under the Renters' Rights and Domestic Abuse Acts, will require more staff to meet demand.

In Reading:

- **186 households were living in emergency accommodation at the end of 2024/25** – up from just 11 in April 2020 and 71 in April 2022. This shows a sharp rise in people needing urgent housing support.
- **447 households were living in temporary accommodation in April 2025** – including emergency housing - nearly double the number from April 2022.
- **4,675 households were on the housing register in August 2025**. Nearly two-thirds needed to move because they were homeless, living in unsuitable housing, had health or welfare needs, or were facing hardship.
- **The Council overspent by £1.2 million on homelessness services in 2024/25** – mainly due to more people needing emergency housing for longer. In response, an extra £884,000 has been added to the 2025/26 budget to help prevent homelessness.

9. Uncertain funding for homelessness, supported housing and rough sleeping services

Most funding for homelessness and housing support in Reading is short-term and announced year-to-year. This makes it difficult to invest in long-term contracts and sustainable solutions. It is hard for commissioned providers to plan ahead, recruit and keep staff. It disrupts commissioning cycles, leads to repeated contract extensions, increases legal risks, and reduces time for proper planning – all while demand for services continues to grow.

In Reading:

- **£3.13 million in Homelessness Prevention Grant was received in 2025/26.** The amount of funding received is decided by central Government each year based on demand, which makes long-term planning difficult.
- **£1.18 million was received in Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant in 2025/26.** This one-year grant covers support for rough sleeping, Housing First, and ex-offenders – but unlike the previous three years, future funding is not guaranteed, creating uncertainty for existing services.
- **£881,919 was received from the Rough Sleeping Accommodation programme in 2025/26.** Unlike the multi-year funding given from 2021 to 2024, this was a one-year grant – creating uncertainty while the Council waits for further government announcements.



Triggers and risk factors

This table sets out the main factors that can lead to homelessness or housing instability at different stages of a person or family's life.

It groups these risks into five areas: contact with services, social experiences, economic pressures, welfare issues, and housing challenges. The risks vary by age, showing that people face different pressures at different points in their lives. Preventing homelessness requires senior leaders and frontline teams across public services – such as health, education, social care, criminal justice, and the Home Office – and community organisations, to work together in coordinating efforts, sharing information, and raising awareness among colleagues and the public. In doing so we can all identify risks earlier and offer the right support at the right time.

Contributing theme	Triggers, causes risk factors (by age in years)					
	0-10	11-15	16-24	25-44	45-59	60+
 <p>Contact with services (statutory, institutions and Home Office)</p>	Adverse childhood experiences		Family conflict and relationship breakdown			
	Child in need / looked after child		Care leaver			Vulnerable adult
	Youth offending		Released from prison			
			Discharged from Armed Forces			
			Discharged from hospital without appropriate accommodation			
			Refugees required to leave Home Office accommodation			
 <p>Social conditions and experiences (environment, community safety, health and education)</p>	Domestic abuse					
	Involved in, or affected by crime, anti-social behaviour harassment or discrimination					
	Poor educational attainment		Lack of qualifications and skills			
			Young parent with children at risk of*			
	Insecure or unsuitable housing conditions, disrepair, overcrowding and/or sofa surfing					
	Poor physical and/or mental health, disability, substance misuse, and/or history of abuse					
	Social isolation					
 <p>Economic deprivation</p>	Shortage of affordable, suitable housing					
			Low income, debt, pay day loans and/or rent arrears			
			Lack of employment			
			Lack of affordable childcare			
 <p>Welfare related</p>			Benefit delays, sanctions, conditionality			
			Benefit caps			
			Limited access to Public Funds			
 <p>Housing related</p>			Local Housing Allowance vs. market rents			
			Affordable housing - demand exceeding supply			
			Supported housing - demand exceeding supply			

Our Priorities

Having clear priorities helps make the best use of resources. They ensure support is well coordinated, outcomes can be measured, and efforts are focused on long-term recovery. Clear priorities help services stay inclusive, responsive, and aligned with wider policy goals - ultimately, they drive real progress in reducing homelessness.

Priority 1:

Intervene early to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping

Identify housing problems early, before they turn into a crisis.

Why: By acting quickly to help people before they lose their home, we can reduce crisis, avoid long stays in emergency accommodation, with better outcomes for individuals and families.

How: We will work closely with public services and community partners to help people at the first sign of housing instability, and we will find ways for those experiencing hidden homelessness to access services and support.

Priority 2:

Break the cycle of homelessness and rough sleeping

Help people move on from homelessness for good by recognising that housing alone is not the solution.

Why: Breaking the cycle helps people, especially children, stay healthy and builds safer, more welcoming communities. Listening and learning all the time helps us support people better and make sure everyone feels respected and understood. Helping with connected problems gives people a better chance to recover and stay stable long term.

How: We will work with public sector and community groups to tackle root causes and reasons for repeat homelessness. We will provide advice and support in ways that our customers can access. We will ask for customer feedback and use this to improve all our services – including supported housing.

Priority 3:

Make sure everyone can access safe, settled, and affordable housing

Continue to facilitate access to homes that meet both legal standards and personal needs – places where people can live well.

Why: A home gives people the foundation they need to rebuild their lives, avoid crisis, and recover in the long term. By working creatively and in partnership we can help people access homes that meet our required standards and suit individual need.

How: We will use new and existing social housing to meet homelessness needs in the best way. We will build stronger partnerships with landlords to increase housing supply. We will make sure everyone can get the right support to find, move into and keep a stable home. We will be creative, but open about the limits on housing choices – like costs, legislation, and what the market can offer – so people understand what is possible and avoid unnecessary frustration.

Our Principles

Principles give us a clear and practical foundation for making decisions. They help align services with people's needs, promote consistency and accountability and guide our Action Plan with integrity and purpose. Our principles show our commitment to delivering services that truly make a difference.

Work together across services to give people better support

Strong partnerships between the Council, health services, probation, community groups, and national agencies like hospitals, prisons, and the Home Office help prevent homelessness and support recovery. By sharing information, coordinating referrals, and offering joined-up services we can make sure advice and support is tailored to each person's needs.



Work closely with charities, community groups, and faith organisations to support people facing homelessness

Local organisations play a vital role in preventing homelessness and helping people recover. We will agree shared values to align service objectives and activities – this will make sure everyone understands what each sector can and can't do. By improving coordination, facilitating access to funding, and learning from community-led models, we can make sure support is joined-up, inclusive, and reaches those who need it most.



Listen to people and use their experiences to shape services

People who've experienced homelessness know what works. By involving them from the start, improving communication and feedback, and making services easier to understand and access, we can build trust, reflect real customer journeys, and design services and support that truly meets people's needs.



Make sure everyone knows their role in preventing homelessness, so people get the help they need to stay housed

Homelessness isn't just a housing issue – it's linked to health, care, safety, and support. We will help other services and sectors understand, and act on, their role in preventing homelessness. A strategic approach will be adopted to ensure consistent outcomes for customers, reducing reliance on informal operational relationships. By joining up services like housing, social care, mental health, community safety, and education, and making everyone responsible for outcomes, we can offer better, more consistent support and stop people falling through gaps in provisions.



Find new and better ways to support people facing homelessness

We need to be creative and flexible in how we design services, using proven approaches and learning from what works elsewhere. We'll be ready to act quickly when funding or opportunities come up – always focusing on what's best for our customers. By working together across sectors, improving how we fund and commission services, and offering tailored housing and support options, we can make sure services and support meet people's needs in ways that make the best use of our funding.



Make sure everyone knows what help is available and how to get it

Services should be easy to find and understand – online, in person, and in the community. Clear, inclusive communication helps people access support, reduces stigma, and builds trust. By improving public awareness, tailoring services to different needs, and sharing success stories, we can make sure everyone can access the services they need.



Use data and insight to improve services and support

By understanding patterns and sharing information, we can better focus our efforts, target support, plan ahead, and make sure services work well for everyone. We'll use data and information responsibly and transparently – always being clear about how and why we are using it. We will use what we learn from people and services to focus on improving outcomes and make sure resources are used effectively where they'll make the biggest difference.





Priority 1: Intervene early to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping



“Even getting a whiff that somebody is homeless... professionals need to be getting in earlier than early.”

Priority 2: Break the cycle of homelessness and rough sleeping



“You can give someone a wonderful home... but that's not enough. They need wraparound support.”

Priority 3: Make sure everyone can access safe, settled and affordable housing



“Having a home is a basic need - even when choices are few and far between, it needs to be a place where a tenant feels respected.”

Strategic influences, alignment and commitments

Our strategy reflects local realities, the ambitions of national policy and sits alongside several other strategies. How these all connect is crucial. The strategy will not be successful without effective cross-Council, cross-sector and partnership working.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic and other major global events, the way homelessness is understood and addressed has changed. These shifts have brought new difficulties, but also some unexpected chances to improve support, especially for people sleeping rough. These changes mean we need to reflect, adapt, and evolve.

Affordable housing delivery

Demand for housing in Reading continues to significantly outstrip supply, with over half of new homes needing to be affordable for people on low incomes, including social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing provided at below market rates. This demand places sustained pressure on homelessness services and housing pathways and a reliance on the private rented sector to meet housing needs.

The Council's Housing Strategy 2020-2025 and the Development and Regeneration Programme 2025-2040 set out ambitious plans to increase the delivery of affordable homes, replace outdated stock, and improve sustainability across the Council's housing portfolio. Strategic site reviews have identified key areas for development, with a focus on creating thriving, inclusive communities and ensuring access to employment, education, and services.

Government policy related to the private rented sector

The private rented housing market is under growing pressure both nationally and locally. A mix of market changes, government policies, and upcoming legal reforms is making it harder to find affordable rental homes. This puts more people at risk of homelessness and increases the Council's reliance on temporary and emergency accommodation.

Many landlords are leaving the sector because they're finding it harder to keep their businesses going due to rising costs, increased taxation and regulatory burdens. The Renters' Rights Act 2025 aims to prevent homelessness by abolishing Section 21 'no fault' evictions and strengthening enforcement and statutory requirements. While these reforms are designed to promote housing stability, they may lead to fewer affordable private rental options, higher rents, and increased demand for enforcement resources.

Housing benefit rates (Local Housing Allowance) have stayed the same, while rents continue to rise due to high demand and fewer available properties. The gap between income and housing costs has existed for many years. It continues to grow and hits low-income households hardest making it more difficult for the Council to secure and retain suitable homes to prevent homelessness in the private rented sector.

Funding and resourcing

Local authorities are financially stretched due to years of reduced central government funding and rising demand for essential services. Pressures from adult and children's social care, homelessness, and special educational needs have grown, while councils face short-term funding cycles that hinder long-term planning. All councils are relying on reserves or asset sales to stay afloat. These challenges have led to widespread cuts in discretionary services and increased strain on core functions.

In Reading, as with most local authorities, our most significant budget pressure in the delivery of homelessness services is the cost of providing emergency and temporary accommodation. Advocating for more sustainable funding models that enable strategic development, and consistent delivery means we can focus on homelessness prevention at the earliest opportunity. Investing in AI and new technology to maximise officer capacity, increase staff skills and find different ways of working will improve our homelessness and rough sleeping services.

A National Plan to End Homelessness

To ensure our work is aligned with the national homelessness and rough sleeping strategy published December 2025, we commit to:

- Deliver measurable outcomes by setting clear goals aligned with national ambitions, including reducing long-term rough sleeping and enhancing the quality and experience of temporary accommodation.
- Embed legal duties and shared responsibility by preparing for and implementing new statutory requirements, such as the Duty to Collaborate, and wherever possible, actively promoting homelessness prevention as a shared priority across public services and partnerships.
- Champion affordable housing delivery by working alongside the Council's Housing Strategy to increase access to social and affordable homes and make best use of existing housing stock, recognising that supply is critical to prevention.
- Ensure safe discharge from institutions by strengthening partnerships with health, justice, and care services to make sure no one leaves hospital, prison, or care without a housing plan.
- Invest in workforce resilience by supporting the development of skilled, confident teams equipped to deliver high-quality services.
- Focus on those most at risk by shaping prevention and support around the needs of people facing the greatest vulnerability, including veterans, prison leavers, care leavers, young people, refugees and migrants, survivors of domestic abuse, individuals affected by exploitation or human trafficking, people leaving hospital, and those experiencing multiple disadvantage such as substance use and those requiring adult social care support.
- Use data, technology and lived experience by strengthening our evidence base and involving people who have experienced homelessness in improving services and outcomes.
- Promote dignity in temporary accommodation by maintaining high standards that minimise disruption and protect stability and wellbeing.
- Maximise funding and partnerships by actively seeking national funding opportunities and working with government and local partners to deliver sustainable solutions in tackling homelessness and rough sleeping.
- Align with national frameworks by monitoring progress against the MHCLG Outcomes Framework to ensure transparency and consistency with national reporting.



These commitments will guide our detailed Action Plan and demonstrate Reading's ambition to make homelessness and rough sleeping rare, brief, and non-recurring.

How we will monitor and oversee progress

To make sure the strategy is working and moving in the right direction, we will regularly check progress and share updates. The Council's Housing Needs team will lead this work, but because the strategy involves many different services, we will also meet every six months with other teams to make sure everything is joined up.

We will work with partners – including community groups, and other public services – to keep track of what is working and where we need to improve. Updates will be shared every six months with senior leaders, strategic boards for housing and other service areas, and the Lead Councillor for Housing.

Keeping the strategy up to date

Each year, we will review and refresh the Action Plan to make sure it reflects what is happening locally and nationally. We will use data on homelessness, housing supply, and service performance to guide this review. We will also look at feedback from partners and people using services.

A full report will be shared with Strategic Housing Board who will check the progress and suggest any changes. Once approved, the updated Action Plan will be published at the start of each financial year. An annual update on delivery progression against the Action Plan will be provided to Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee.

Understanding the language of Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A strategy for Reading 2026 - 2031

Word or phrase	Definition
Access	Being able to get help, use services, or go into places.
Action Plan	A clear list of steps that shows what needs to be done, who will do it, and when.
Adult Social Care	Help for adults aged 18 or over with care and support needs so they can live as independently as possible in their own homes. This includes older people, people with physical disabilities or learning disabilities, and mental health service users. Social care needs are making sure you eat well, looking after yourself, help with day-to-day living, emotional wellbeing, and mental health, staying safe and supporting family and friends to care.
Affordability	<p>Whether someone can pay for housing without struggling to afford other basic needs – within a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy it helps us understand if people can keep their home while still paying for food, bills, and essentials.</p> <p>Affordability is defined for local authorities under the Housing Act 1996 as a measure of whether a person can meet the cost of accommodation without compromising essential living expenses. It considers income, benefits, housing costs, and other necessary outgoings. Accommodation is not affordable if paying for it would leave the person unable to afford basic needs like food, heating, and clothing.</p>
Affordable housing	Homes that people on low incomes can afford to rent or buy without struggling to pay for other essentials. It includes social rented, affordable rented, and intermediate housing provided at below market rates.
Asylum Seeker	A person who has fled their country due to fear of persecution or serious harm and has formally applied for protection (asylum) in another country, but whose claim has not yet been decided; asylum seekers may face particular vulnerabilities to homelessness due to limited access to housing and support services during the application process.
Care Leaver	<p>The legal definition of a care leaver is a young person has been in care for 13 weeks, without a break, and is in care on or after their 16th birthday. They have the right to access various services.</p> <p>Leaving care is the process by which a young person transitions out of the formal care system – such as foster care, residential care, or other local authority arrangements – typically upon reaching adulthood, and begins to live independently, often requiring tailored support to prevent homelessness and promote stable housing pathways.</p>
Commissioning	Planning and paying for services to help people, like housing or support services – within a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy this can mean paying other organisations to deliver services on behalf of the Council because they have the best specialist skills needed to provide that service for our customers.

Word or phrase	Definition
Community-led	That local people, groups, and organisations help shape and deliver solutions – within a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy, it means listening to those with lived experience and working together to create services that meet real needs.
Community partners	Organisations or groups that collaborate with local authorities or service providers to support shared goals, such as improving housing, health, or social outcomes within a community. They may include charities, faith groups, voluntary organisations, and public sector bodies.
Complex Needs	Someone is facing several serious challenges at the same time – like mental ill-health, substance misuse, trauma, or disability – which makes it harder to find and keep safe housing, and means they need joined-up support from different services.
Complex Adults Panel	A meeting attended by professionals from many different services, to discuss and plan how to manage risks for people over 18 who have complex needs, and who may not currently be accessing help from support services.
Consultation	Asking people – especially those with lived experience, frontline workers, community, and faith groups – for their views and ideas, so that the strategy is shaped by real experiences and meets local needs.
Cross-sector	Different organisations and services – like housing, health, social care, charities, and the faith sector – working together to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in a joined-up way.
Customer	The person using a service - within a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy, it refers to individuals who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and are receiving support, advice, or offers of accommodation.
Cyclical homelessness or Cycle of homelessness	Someone keeps becoming homeless again and again.
Decent	<p>Safe, clean, and good enough to live in – within a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy, it refers to housing that meets basic standards, so people are not living in poor or unsafe conditions.</p> <p>Decent is defined for local authorities under the Housing Act 1996 as if a home meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing, is in a reasonable state of repair, has reasonably modern facilities (e.g. kitchen, bathroom), and provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort (heating and insulation). The standard is assessed using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).</p>

Word or phrase	Definition
Domestic abuse	Can happen between people in an intimate, former intimate, or family relationship. It can be a single incident of abusive behaviour but is more likely to be a repeated and habitual way for one person to control another person. Victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group. Behaviour is abusive if it consists of any of the following: physical or sexual abuse, violent or threatening behaviour, controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse or psychological, emotional, or other abuse. It also includes so-called honour-based abuse, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage. Children who see, hear, or experience the effects of the abuse and are related to either of the parties are also considered victims of domestic abuse.
Early intervention	Giving help as soon as someone shows signs of struggling - within a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy, it means acting quickly to stop someone from losing their home or ending up sleeping rough, by offering support before things get worse.
Emergency accommodation	A place to stay quickly when someone has nowhere safe to sleep. Emergency accommodation is defined for local authorities under the Housing Act 1996 as short-term housing provided by a local authority under Section 188 when it has reason to believe an applicant may be homeless, eligible for assistance, and in priority need. It is offered immediately and temporarily while the authority investigates the homelessness application.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)	Making sure everyone is treated fairly, feels respected, and has equal access to support – within a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy, it means recognising different needs and removing barriers so that services work for all people, regardless of their background or identity.
Go Vocal	An online consultation platform that lets people share their views and ideas.
Governance	How decisions are made, who is responsible, and how progress is checked - within a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy, it ensures that services are well managed, accountable, and working together to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping.
Hidden homelessness	Individuals who do not have stable or secure housing but are not visibly homeless; they may be staying temporarily with friends or family (often referred to as "sofa surfing"), living in overcrowded or unsafe conditions, or residing in places not intended for habitation. People experiencing hidden homelessness are often not captured in official homelessness statistics.
Homelessness Partnership (HoP)	A collaborative arrangement between local authorities, statutory services, voluntary and community sector organisations, and other stakeholders, working together to prevent homelessness, support people experiencing homelessness, and develop coordinated responses that improve housing outcomes.
Housing First	A way of helping people by giving them a home first, then offering support.
Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF)	A UK government funding scheme enabling local authorities to acquire units of temporary accommodation to support schemes which help displaced Afghan nationals.

Word or phrase	Definition
Lived experience	The personal knowledge, insights, and understanding gained by individuals through directly experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity, which can be used to inform and improve service design, policy development, and strategic decision-making.
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements are the way in which the Police, Probation and prison services work together with other agencies, including homelessness services, to assess and manage the risk posed by certain offenders, to protect the public.
MARAC	The Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference is where professionals from many different agencies share information and create a safety plan for victims of high-risk domestic abuse.
Principle	A fundamental value or guiding belief that underpins strategic decision-making, policy development, and service delivery, ensuring that actions taken are consistent, ethical, and aligned with the overall aims of the strategy.
Priority	A key area of focus or action identified within the strategy that is considered essential to achieving its aims, guiding resource allocation, service development, and partnership efforts to prevent and reduce homelessness effectively.
Private rented sector	Housing that is owned by private landlords and rented out to tenants, typically through tenancy agreements; it plays a significant role in accommodating individuals and families at risk of or exiting homelessness, although affordability, security, and access can present challenges.
Public services	Services provided by government or public sector organisations to meet the needs of the community, such as healthcare, education, housing, policing, probation, and social care. They are typically funded by taxation and aim to promote public welfare and social equity.
Quota Queue	A way to give priority for social housing to a set number of people who meet specific criteria, like being former members of the Armed Forces or care leavers.
Refugee	A person who has been granted protection under international or national law after being recognised as having a well-founded fear of persecution in their home country; refugees are entitled to certain rights and support, including access to housing, but may still face challenges that increase their risk of homelessness.
Rehabilitation programme (Rehab)	Structured support services designed to help individuals address and recover from drug or alcohol dependency, often including medical treatment, counselling, peer support, and housing-related support, with the aim of improving health, stability, and reducing the risk of homelessness or finding a lasting way out of it.

Word or phrase	Definition
Rough sleeping	People who are sleeping, about to bed down (e.g. sitting or standing next to their bedding), or actually bedded down in the open air—such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters, or encampments. It also includes people in buildings or places not designed for habitation, such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or makeshift shelters like “bashes.” This definition excludes: People in hostels or shelters, individuals in campsites or protest sites, people sofa surfing, in squats or Travellers.
Safeguarding	The process of protecting individuals – particularly children, young people, and adults at risk – from abuse, neglect, exploitation, or harm, ensuring their safety and wellbeing through appropriate policies, procedures, and multi-agency collaboration.
Safeguarding Adults Board	A multi-agency partnership established by local authorities under the Care Act 2014. Its role is to coordinate and oversee the safeguarding of adults with care and support needs who may be at risk of abuse or neglect. The board works with services such as housing, health, and social care to ensure effective protection and promote wellbeing.
Social housing	Affordable rented accommodation provided by local authorities or housing associations, allocated based on need through statutory schemes which are governed by Part VI of the Housing Act 1996.
Stakeholder	Any individual, group, or organisation with an interest, role, or responsibility in preventing or addressing homelessness, including people with lived experience, service providers, commissioners, statutory agencies, community, voluntary and faith groups, and policymakers, whose collaboration is essential to delivering effective and sustainable solutions.
Standards	Regulatory benchmarks that housing providers must meet to ensure accommodation is safe, habitable, and well-managed. These include performance standards for social landlords, suitability and affordability of housing, and compliance with health and safety requirements such as the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and the Decent Homes Standard.
Statutory services	Services that public bodies, such as local authorities, the NHS, and the police, are legally required to provide, including housing, health, social care, and safeguarding support, which play a vital role in preventing and responding to homelessness through coordinated and accountable interventions.
Stigma	The negative attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes that lead to discrimination or social exclusion of individuals experiencing homelessness, often creating barriers to accessing support, housing, and employment, and impacting mental health and recovery.

Word or phrase	Definition
Strategy	A structured and coordinated plan that outlines the vision, priorities, actions, and partnerships required to prevent and address homelessness and rough sleeping, guiding decision-making and resource allocation over a defined period.
Substance misuse	The harmful or hazardous use of alcohol, drugs, or other substances that can negatively impact a person's physical and mental health, relationships, and housing stability, and is often both a cause and consequence of homelessness and continued rough sleeping, requiring integrated support and treatment services.
Suitable	Housing that meets the assessed needs of the applicant and their household, considering factors such as safety, affordability, location, physical accessibility, and household circumstances. Local authorities must ensure accommodation is suitable when fulfilling homelessness duties under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.
Supported housing / accommodation	Accommodation that includes access to on-site or visiting support services, designed to help individuals with specific needs – such as those related to homelessness, mental health, substance misuse, or disability – maintain their tenancy, improve wellbeing, and work towards independent living.
Temporary accommodation	Short-term housing provided by a local authority to meet its legal duty to homeless individuals or families under Section 188 of the Housing Act 1996. It is offered while homelessness applications are assessed or until suitable long-term housing is secured. This accommodation may be provided directly by the authority or through housing associations and includes hostels, B&Bs, or other interim housing.
Tenancy sustainment / floating support	The practical and emotional assistance provided to individuals and households to help them maintain their accommodation, addressing issues such as budgeting, tenancy rights, mental health, substance misuse, and access to services, with the aim of preventing repeat homelessness and promoting long-term housing stability.
Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS)	Includes non-profit organisations, charities, community and faith-based groups that play a vital role in preventing and addressing homelessness through advocacy, service delivery, outreach, and support tailored to local needs.



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Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: An action plan for Reading 2026 – 2031

<i>Action</i>	<i>Year to be completed</i>	<i>Action owners</i>
1. Intervene early to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping		
Create and adopt a full Communications Plan to promote homelessness prevention and rough sleeping services that are visible and instil confidence		
1.1	<p>Develop a strategic communications plan: Co-design a borough-wide communications plan that promotes early help-seeking, destigmatises homelessness, and builds trust in Homelessness Prevention and Housing Needs services.</p> <p>Outcome: A coordinated, inclusive and proactive approach to public messaging.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>RBC Housing Media & Communications Manager</i> <i>All Housing Needs Managers</i></p>
1.2	<p>Create a shared communications visual / planner: Develop a Gantt chart, or similar visual, accessible via SharePoint to map weekly, seasonal, and annual communications activities, with quarterly reviews and annual refreshes.</p> <p>Outcome: Clear visibility across Housing Needs managers and SLT of planned communications across all Housing Needs service areas.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>RBC ICT Team</i> <i>Other statutory and VCFS partners</i></p>
Improve visibility and accessibility of homelessness services through digital and print communication		
1.3	<p>Deliver regular, multi-channel campaigns: Develop and implement information, myth-busting and awareness campaigns across digital (Housing Online, Nextdoor, X, Facebook), RBC and partner websites, local media, and community networks to promote services. Messaging should include successes and positive real-life stories, as well as consistent messaging on housing option limitations, highlighting the realistic availability of accommodation.</p> <p>Outcome: Increased visibility, transparency, public understanding and engagement, and management of expectations and outcomes from partners and customers, particularly regarding housing solutions the Council and other services can offer.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1,2</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>RBC Housing Media & Communications Manager</i> <i>All Housing Needs Managers</i> <i>RBC ICT Team</i></p>

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Year 1: Apr 2026 – Mar 2027, **Year 2:** Apr 2027 – Mar 2028, **Year 3:** Apr 2028 – Mar 2029, **Year 4:** Apr 2029 – Mar 2030, **Year 5:** Apr 2030 – Mar 2031

1.4	<p>Strengthen community and partner communication: Ensure homelessness-related content is regularly shared via RBC community sector networks to reach diverse, vulnerable and harder to reach groups and future customers of the service.</p> <p>Provide accessible formats for all communications plan campaigns materials: Ensure all communications are available in accessible formats, including hard copies where needed and distribute in key community locations for those with limited digital access.</p> <p>Outcome: Broader reach and improved awareness across all communities, inclusive messaging that reaches digitally excluded groups.</p>	1,2	<p><i>RBC Housing Media & Communications Manager</i></p> <p><i>All Housing Needs Managers</i></p> <p><i>VCFS, non-statutory and statutory stakeholders</i></p>
1.5	<p>Incorporate stakeholder and customer consultation outcomes and feedback: Establish a feedback loop with internal teams, external partners, service users, and those with lived experience to inform improvements to online and printed materials and the messaging tone, content, and delivery of overall communications.</p> <p>Outcome: Communications that reflect lived experience and local needs and content shaped by lived experience and professional insights that enhances accessibility.</p>	2	<p><i>All Housing Needs Managers</i></p> <p><i>RBC ICT Team</i></p> <p><i>Data and Performance Lead</i></p> <p><i>VCFS, non-statutory and statutory stakeholders</i></p> <p><i>Service users and those with lived experience</i></p>
1.6	<p>Conduct a full digital (intranet, website, social media) and literature content audit: Review all digital content / website pages related to homelessness and rough sleeping across Council-owned and other publication platforms, and published literature, to assess accuracy, relevance, inclusivity and accessibility.</p> <p>Outcome: Up-to-date, clear, user-friendly content with inclusive language(s) and improved navigation that reflects accurate information about current services and best practice for residents and professionals seeking advice or support.</p>	3,4 <i>Most recent review 2024/25</i>	<p><i>RBC Housing Media & Communications Manager</i></p> <p><i>All Housing Needs Managers</i></p> <p><i>RBC ICT Team</i></p> <p><i>VCFS, non-statutory and statutory stakeholders</i></p> <p><i>Service users and those with lived experience</i></p>
1.7	<p>Benchmark against best practice: Compare Reading Borough Council's homelessness communications and online content with at least 5 other local authorities or national organisations to identify gaps and opportunities.</p> <p>Outcome: Content aligned with sector-leading standards.</p>	3,5	<p><i>All Housing Needs Managers</i></p>

Early identification toolkit for homelessness risk		
1.9	<p>Adopt the Ending Rough Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool (ERSRAT): Once rolled out nationally, embed its use across all homelessness assessments.</p> <p>Integrate ERSRAT outcomes into H-CLIC and other system workflows to ensure consistent data capture and reporting.</p> <p>Deliver training on the ERSRAT to relevant housing needs teams and scope its use with frontline Council services e.g. Customer Fulfilment Centre to screen homelessness vulnerabilities earlier and support prevention team priorities.</p> <p>Outcome: Consistent and compliant use of ERSRAT by the Homelessness Prevention team and reporting to MHCLG, staff are equipped to spot early warning signs and intervene sooner.</p>	<p>2</p> <p><i>Rough Sleeping Initiatives (RSI) Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>VCFS, non-statutory and statutory stakeholders</i></p> <p><i>Data and Performance Team</i></p>
1.10	<p>Explore adaptation of ERSRAT to support non-homelessness specialist staff to identify early indicators of wider homelessness risk (e.g., rent arrears, relationship breakdown, hospital discharge, school exclusions).</p> <p>Outcome: Improvements in identification of hidden homelessness and precariously housed households.</p>	<p>3,4</p> <p><i>RSI Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p>
1.11	<p>Monitor and evaluate impact of ERSRAT and any other operational toolkits: Conduct a formal evaluation of toolkit usage and impact on early referrals.</p> <p>Outcome: Evidence-based improvements to the toolkit and referral processes.</p>	<p>2,3,4,5</p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>VCFS, non-statutory and statutory stakeholders</i></p>
Strengthening data sharing for early risk detection		
1.12	<p>Scope, and where possible, establish formal data sharing agreements: Develop and sign formal data sharing agreements with key stakeholders (e.g. housing providers, health services, criminal justice, education, social care) to enable regular and timely access to relevant data.</p> <p>Scope and, where possible, implement regular data exchange protocols: Set up automated or scheduled data exchange processes to receive up-to-date information on indicators such as rent arrears, hospital discharges, prison releases, school exclusions, and service disengagement.</p> <p>Outcome: Consistent and secure data flow to support early intervention, timely identification of individuals at risk of homelessness.</p>	<p>2,3,4,5</p> <p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>Legal Services</i></p> <p><i>Information Governance Team</i></p> <p><i>Statutory and non-statutory stakeholders</i></p>
1.13	<p>Review and evaluate data sharing impact: Conduct an annual review of data sharing effectiveness assessing how shared data has contributed to early identification and prevention.</p> <p>Outcome: Continuous improvement of data sharing practices.</p>	<p>3,4,5</p> <p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>Legal Services / IG Team</i></p>

Enhance data quality and centralised reporting			
1.14	<p>Align homelessness and rough sleeping data collation with the National Plan for Ending Homelessness Outcomes Framework (MHCLG) metrics: Ensure all statutory return requirements are met to truly and fully represent Reading's homelessness and rough sleeping needs.</p> <p>Outcome: Enables accurate reporting, benchmarking, and compliance with national standards. Demonstrates need and ensures we are maximising our entitlement to local authority grant funding.</p>	1 - 5	<p><i>All Housing Needs Managers</i></p> <p><i>Reading ICT Team</i></p> <p><i>Data and Performance Lead / Team</i></p>
1.15	<p>Improve data capture for nuanced causes of homelessness: Review, and where necessary, amend data entry fields within housing and case management systems to better distinguish nuanced causes of homelessness.</p> <p>Outcome: More accurate understanding of homelessness drivers.</p>	2,3,4,5	
1.16	<p>Centralise data collection and reporting: Transition all homelessness-related data capture to a single housing/case management system, eliminating the use of siloed spreadsheets – a one platform approach.</p> <p>Outcome: Consistent and reliable data for H-CLIC, Emergency Accommodation usage and SLG reporting.</p>	1 - 5	
1.17	<p>Train staff on data quality and system use: Deliver training to all relevant staff and managers on accurate data entry, use of centralised systems, and understanding reporting requirements.</p> <p>Outcome: Improved consistency and confidence in data handling.</p>	1 - 5	
1.18	<p>Monitor and evaluate data quality: Implement quarterly data quality reviews focusing on completeness, accuracy, and consistency across services.</p> <p>Outcome: Continuous improvement in data reliability.</p>	2	
Data-driven identification, warning systems for early risk identification and targeted intervention			
1.19	<p>Improve equalities data collection: Co-design with service users/those with lived experience a revised equalities monitoring form to ensure cultural and trauma-informed responsiveness.</p> <p>Outcome: More accurate and representative data on service users.</p>	2	<p><i>All Housing Needs Managers</i></p> <p><i>Service users and those with lived experience</i></p>
1.20	<p>Continue commissioning predictive data tools: Maintain and enhance the use of the LIFT dashboard (or a similar predictive tool) to identify households at risk due to rent arrears, low income, and debt.</p> <p>Outcome: Ongoing data-driven targeting of prevention efforts.</p>	<i>Ongoing</i>	<p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>RSI Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>Data and Performance Lead</i></p>

1.21	<p>Explore AI enabled insight and road maps to intervene early: Develop risk predictive tools and enable pattern detection across HCLIC, health, education data. Scope the use of AI to create automated risk alerts, a centralised warning system to flag individuals at risk of homelessness due to factors such as rent arrears, hospital discharge, school exclusions, benefit changes, frequent service use, overcrowding. Consider undertaking a place-based pilot within high-risk wards.</p> <p>Outcome: More efficient, insightful AI driven targeting of earliest intervention and prevention efforts for vulnerable households, with improved visibility and coordination across services.</p>	<p><i>Scoping/ pilot 3</i></p> <p><i>Rollout 4</i></p>	<p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>RSI Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>Data and Performance Lead</i></p>
1.22	<p>Integrate qualitative and quantitative data: Introduce a qualitative data collection tool to complement LIFT dashboard/future AI insights, focusing on early contact points with professionals or community services to better understand early intervention opportunities.</p> <p>Triangulate quantitative and qualitative data: Integrate LIFT dashboard data with other datasets (e.g. housing, health, education) and qualitative insights from service users / those with lived experience to identify and understand patterns and anomalies and where early interventions can be most effective.</p> <p>Outcome: Better understanding of early intervention opportunities, more holistic understanding of homelessness risk.</p>	3,4	
1.23	<p>Evaluate and refine data-driven approaches: Conduct an annual evaluation of the impact on early intervention and prevention outcomes of all data driven efforts, across housing needs.</p> <p>Outcome: Continuous improvement of data tools and targeting strategies.</p>	1 - 5	
Holistic and inclusive approaches to understanding and intervening in homelessness and rough sleeping			
1.24	<p>Enhance Personalised Housing Plans (PHPs): To ensure they address wider causes of homelessness and include signposting referrals to specialist support where needed, including financial inclusion and debt/money advice services to improve readiness for access to housing e.g. bank account access and ID support.</p> <p>Scope option to provide customers with an ‘easy read’ PHP that can be easily shared and understood by stakeholders and VCFS partners to ensure consistent and cross-sector support.</p> <p>Outcome: More effective and personalised PHPs.</p>	1	<p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p>
1.25	<p>Bi-annual case review for learning: Implement bi-annual thematic reviews of unsuccessful homelessness prevention and rough sleeping cases to identify patterns and targeted interventions for high-risk households or locations.</p> <p>Outcome: Identification of patterns and targeted interventions for high-risk households or locations.</p>	2	

1.26	<p>Reframe case analysis: Revise homelessness case review frameworks to include broader contributing factors (e.g. bereavement, anti-social behaviour, relationship breakdowns), beyond the most recent homelessness reason.</p> <p>Outcome: A new template for case reviews used across all services.</p>	2	
1.27	<p>Target hidden homelessness: Develop and pilot a targeted research and subsequent outreach programmes to identify and support individuals experiencing hidden homelessness (e.g. sofa surfing, insecure housing).</p> <p>Outcome: Increased identification and engagement with hidden homeless individuals.</p>	3,4	<i>RSI Team Manager</i>
Maximise referrals and access to homelessness prevention and rough sleeping services			
1.28	<p>Promote needs-based access to homelessness services by ending the perception that people must sleep rough to receive help, using the Service Communications Plan.</p> <p>Outcome: Reductions in rough sleeping and no first, or second nights out.</p>	1	<i>RSI Team Manager</i> <i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i> <i>Housing Operations Manager</i> <i>VCFS, non-statutory and statutory stakeholders</i>
1.29	<p>Review and promote referral routes: Complete a full review of all referral pathways into homelessness prevention and rough sleeping services, including internal and external routes to ensure clear, mapped referral pathways for those who are, and are not, subject to the Duty to Refer (and in future the Duty to Collaborate).</p> <p>Outcome: Increased awareness and improved referral accuracy, increases in Duty to Refer referrals, resulting in earlier intervention.</p>	2	<i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i> <i>Housing Operations Manager</i> <i>RSI Team Manager</i> <i>VCFS, non-statutory and statutory stakeholders</i>
1.30	<p>Embed co-production in referral design: Use knowledge of the established Homelessness Lived Experience Forum and Experts by Experience to assess and redesign referral mechanisms and forms ensuring that referrals processes are accessible, inclusive, and user informed.</p> <p>Outcome: Referral processes that are accessible, inclusive, and user informed.</p>	2	<i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i> <i>Housing Operations Manager</i> <i>RSI Team Manager</i> <i>VCFS, non-statutory and statutory stakeholders</i> <i>Service users and those with lived experience</i>

1.31	<p>Develop bespoke referral guidance materials and training sessions: Co-design and distribute tailored guidance and training for internal and external partners, regarding homelessness and supported accommodation, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step-by-step quick reference guides • Information on services • What to expect post-referral • FAQs and contact points <p>Outcome: Improved partner confidence and referral quality.</p>	2	<p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>RSI Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>VCFS, non-statutory and statutory stakeholders</i></p>
1.32	<p>Target hard-to-reach groups with outreach: Resource permitting, launch place-based targeted outreach initiatives, to increase engagement and early intervention, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent and baby/child community groups • Upstream prevention for family evictions • Place-based outreach in high-deprivation wards • Embedded housing advice in non-housing services (GPs, schools, job centres) • Outreach to hidden homelessness groups (those sofa surfing, overcrowded households, disengaged young people) <p>Scope a fully Council branded approach to outreach that ensures residents can easily and visibly recognise individuals who can provide one-stop-shop advice on homelessness.</p> <p>Outcome: Increased engagement and early intervention.</p>	4	<p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>RSI Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>VCFS, non-statutory and statutory stakeholders</i></p>
Strengthen homelessness workforce resilience			
1.33	<p>Ensure housing needs staff have time and capacity to learn and apply new knowledge: including new legislation, policies and procedures.</p> <p>Enhance skills and retain expertise: by offering and encouraging uptake of all available training opportunities.</p> <p>Adopt the National Workforce Programme under the National Plan to End Homelessness: Opt into resources and training offered including updates and new chapters in the Homelessness Code of Guidance and annual refresher training.</p> <p>Outcome: A skilled, stable workforce with low turnover, enabling consistent service delivery and able to focus on early intervention to prevent homelessness.</p>	1 and ongoing	<p><i>All Housing Needs Managers</i></p>

Wider Council and sector workforce training to support early intervention and referral into prevention services

<p>1.34</p>	<p>Co-develop, deliver and review a rolling training programme/library for early identification of those experiencing housing instability with internal partners, including preparation training for those subject to the Duty to Collaborate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-develop induction and refresher training with the Learning & Development Team for internal services including customer fulfilment centre (frontline services), social care, public health, community safety, enforcement, environmental health, and private sector housing. • Consult service managers to identify priority training topics (e.g. trauma-informed care, domestic abuse, mental health, financial stress indicators). • Include easily accessible training on homelessness eligibility criteria to support a unified approach and consistent messaging on housing option limitations, highlighting the realistic availability of accommodation, especially with Council frontline services to avoid customers being repeatedly redirected between Council, statutory and VCFS services. <p>Outcome: Internal staff can identify nuanced signs of housing instability, cross-sector awareness and improved referral pathways resulting in fewer crisis homelessness presentations and management of customer expectations regarding housing solutions the Council and other services can offer.</p>	<p><i>Core modules 2,3</i></p> <p><i>Refreshers 4</i></p>	<p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>Internal and statutory sector stakeholders</i></p>
<p>1.35</p>	<p>Co-develop, deliver and review a rolling training programme/library for early identification of those experiencing housing instability with external partners, including preparation training for those subject to the Duty to Collaborate, including primary and secondary healthcare (GPs, midwives, mental health services), Registered Providers, prisons and probation, Councillors, Reading’s Homelessness Partnership and VCFS organisations, commissioned homelessness services, local businesses and DWP.</p> <p>Integrate role-specific homelessness risk indicators into training materials (e.g. financial anxiety in GP consultations, frequent ED visits linked to isolation).</p> <p>Include easily accessible training on homelessness eligibility criteria to support a unified approach and consistent messaging on housing options limitations, highlighting the realistic availability of accommodation, especially with Council frontline services to avoid customers being repeatedly redirected between Council, statutory and VCFS services.</p> <p>Scope the adoption of a reusable training library for homelessness and rough sleeping topics that can be uploaded to, accessed and refreshed by Council, stakeholders and VCFS staff.</p> <p>Outcome: Staff can identify nuanced signs of housing instability, increased community-level understanding and support, cross-sector awareness and improved referral pathways resulting in fewer crisis homelessness presentations and management of customer expectations regarding housing solutions the Council and other services can offer.</p>	<p><i>2,3</i></p>	<p><i>RSI Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>External and statutory sector stakeholders</i></p>

<i>Action</i>	<i>Year to be completed</i>	<i>Action owners</i>
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2. Break the cycle of homelessness and rough sleeping

Enable cross-sector communication and coordinated action to prevent homelessness – beyond just ‘bricks and mortar’

2.1	<p>Prepare for implementation of the forthcoming Duty to Collaborate by developing a readiness plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify cross sector public services – such as health, social care, education and justice – who must proactively identify individuals at risk of homelessness (e.g. post-hospital discharge or leaving prison). • Educate services about their legal requirement to take reasonable and direct steps to help secure housing (not just refer individuals elsewhere), their requirement to be collectively responsible for national homelessness and rough sleeping performance targets and outcomes e.g. halving long-term rough sleeping and reducing first-night homelessness after prison or hospital and that homelessness is not the sole responsibility of housing teams. • Implement formal partnerships (e.g. MOUs) with other public sectors to deliver multi-agency provision – including data sharing agreements, joint protocols, regular multi-disciplinary coordination meetings, governance and escalation routes. Apply Multi-Agency Risk Management frameworks to prevent repeat homelessness. <p>Outcome: Early detection of homelessness risk enabling timely housing support to prevent people falling through service gaps, shifts other sector responses from reactive to preventative approaches, creates a unified front against homelessness, ensures that agencies are held collectively responsible for performance and outcomes and homelessness is perceived as a system-wide challenge that public bodies embed into their everyday work and governance.</p>	<i>Pending legislation</i>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>RSI Team Manager</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Relevant public sector stakeholders (to be confirmed)</i></p>
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Strengthening partnerships for coordinated multi-agency homelessness prevention

2.2	<p>Strengthen support for those experiencing or fleeing domestic abuse by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedding the national Domestic Abuse prevention toolkit into Personalised Housing Plans (PHPs) and temporary accommodation placement protocols. • Delivering joint training with domestic abuse support service providers to ensure consistent, trauma-informed practice. • Minimising out-of-area placements through robust safety planning and risk assessment. • Establishing clear referral pathways and improving multi-agency coordination to safeguard individuals and prevent homelessness. • Review Sanctuary Scheme and implement/promote any changes to support survivors to remain in their homes and prevent future homelessness and family disruption. <p>Outcome: Safer housing options, improved continuity of care for survivors of domestic abuse, with reduced reliance on out-of-area placements and greater use of toolkit-based prevention pathways.</p>	<p><i>Pending publication of toolkit</i></p> <p>2</p>	<p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>Community Safety TVP</i></p> <p><i>DA support services providers</i></p>
2.3	<p>Prevent young people and care leaver entering homelessness and/or rough sleeping cycles: Implement the <i>Preventing and Reducing Youth Homelessness Action Plan</i> in partnership with Children's Social Care and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish robust housing transition pathways and early intervention as a safeguarding measure • Provide early planning, financial advice, and prioritised housing access (quota queue). • Improve data-sharing protocols for continuity of care. • Enhance tenancy sustainment support, including financial inclusion (bank accounts, ID). • Prepare for the National Youth Strategy and youth prevention toolkit and adopt it within 6 months of release. • Scope and pilot awareness sessions in schools, colleges, universities, and youth services, including LGBTQ+ groups. • Continue and expand specialist homelessness prevention liaison and in-reach roles for young people. • Review and recommission young peoples supported accommodation services <p>Outcome: Greater housing stability and reduced homelessness among young people and care leavers, with improved early identification in education settings, stronger multi-agency engagement, and a measurable reduction in homelessness presentations and repeat homelessness.</p>	<p><i>Pending publication of National Youth Strategy and youth prevention toolkit</i></p> <p>3</p> <p><i>Non-critical components</i></p> <p>4</p>	<p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>Children's Social Care</i></p> <p><i>Local schools, colleges and universities</i></p> <p><i>Commissioned supported housing stakeholders</i></p>

2.4	<p>Prevent hospital discharge and homelessness and/or rough sleeping cycles by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing and improving discharge planning protocols in all local hospitals, including Royal Berkshire (RBH) and Prospect Park (PPH). • Introducing cross-sector commitment agreements for housing allocations post-discharge, with clear shared responsibilities and rapid interventions (Duty to Collaborate responsibilities) if tenancies are at risk. • Embedding routine address history checks at the point of admission to identify housing instability and referrals to homelessness prevention services early. • Improving data-sharing protocols to ensure continuity of care and reducing repeat homelessness. • Enhancing post-institution tenancy sustainment support. • Continuing and expanding specialist homelessness prevention liaison and in-reach roles for hospitals. <p>Outcome: Early identification of housing risks, fewer delayed discharges, and improved housing stability through coordinated health and housing support and fewer crisis homelessness presentations and placements in emergency accommodation.</p>	3,4	<p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>Public Health</i></p> <p><i>Adult Social Care</i></p> <p><i>RBH and PPH</i></p> <p><i>Tenancy sustainment services</i></p>
2.5	<p>Prevent leaving prison and homelessness and/or rough sleeping cycles by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening housing pathways and release planning in partnership with probation and housing services. • Embedding routine address history checks at custody admission to identify housing instability and referrals to homelessness prevention services early. • Introducing cross-sector commitment agreements with probation for housing allocations post-release, with shared responsibilities and rapid intervention (Duty to Collaborate responsibilities) if tenancies are at risk. • Improving data-sharing protocols with prisons, probation and post-custody accommodation providers (CAS2 and CAS3) to protect tenancies, achieve timely move-on (CAS2 and CAS3), ensure continuity of care and reduce repeat homelessness. • Enhancing tenancy sustainment support for individuals leaving custody. • Continuing and expanding specialist homelessness prevention liaison and in-reach roles for prison. <p>Outcome: Earlier identification of housing risks, improved release planning, and greater housing stability for prison leavers – reducing homelessness presentations and breaking the cycle of repeat homelessness.</p>	3,4	<p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>Prisons</i></p> <p><i>Probation</i></p> <p><i>Tenancy sustainment services</i></p>

2.6	<p>Prevent leaving asylum accommodation/migrant homelessness and/or rough sleeping cycles by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing clear referral pathways and early planning with accommodation providers and housing services. • Improving data-sharing protocols between asylum accommodation providers, housing teams, and support agencies to ensure continuity of care. • Enhancing tenancy sustainment support for those transitioning from asylum accommodation. • Continuing and expanding specialist homelessness prevention liaison and in-reach roles for asylum accommodation. <p>Outcome: Earlier identification of housing risks and timely, coordinated multi-agency interventions, resulting in reduced homelessness risk and improved housing stability for asylum accommodation leavers.</p>	3,4	<p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>VCFS stakeholders</i></p> <p><i>Accommodation providers</i></p> <p><i>Home Office</i></p>
2.7	<p>Prevent armed forces leavers/veterans and homelessness and/or rough sleeping cycles by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing early intervention and referral processes prior to discharge. • Strengthening housing pathways through improved data-sharing between military services, housing providers, and support agencies. • Embedding veteran ‘flags’ in case management systems and providing staff with awareness packs on veteran entitlements and local support services. • Prioritising allocations with Registered Providers where applicable. <p>Outcome: Reduced homelessness and rough sleeping among armed forces leavers through proactive planning, coordinated multi-agency support, and improved access to housing options.</p>	3,4	<p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>VCFS stakeholders</i></p> <p><i>Armed Forces</i></p> <p><i>Registered Providers</i></p>
2.8	<p>Prevent leaving Adult Social Care commissioned accommodation homelessness and/or rough sleeping cycles by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening early intervention to identify and address risks before placements breakdown. • Developing multi-agency protocols for proactive risk identification and escalation, including pre-action / pre-eviction processes. • Ensuring continuity of care through alternative, appropriate housing pathways rather than defaulting to homelessness services (Duty to Collaborate). • Improving data-sharing and joint planning between ASC, housing, and health partners to reduce evictions and rough sleeping. <p>Outcome: Fewer placement breakdowns and reduced homelessness among adults with complex needs through proactive intervention, coordinated care, and suitable housing solutions and fewer homelessness presentations in crisis.</p>	3,4	<p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>Adult Social Care</i></p> <p><i>ASC Accommodation Providers</i></p>

2.9	<p>Prevent homelessness due to exploitation and human trafficking by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedding Modern Slavery screening within homelessness triage processes and link findings to safeguarding protocols. • Developing clear referral pathways to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) • Providing staff training to ensure early identification and appropriate support. <p>Outcome: Improved detection and response to exploitation and human trafficking through consistent screening, timely referrals, and integrated safeguarding measures – reducing risk and enhancing protection for vulnerable individuals.</p>	3,4	<p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>NRM</i></p> <p><i>Supporting VCFS organisations</i></p>
2.10	<p>Prevent leaving commissioned supported housing homelessness and/or rough sleeping cycles by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing proactive measures to address common causes of eviction, such as service charge arrears, property damage, and aggressive behaviours. • Introducing early intervention protocols, including financial support and budgeting advice, substance misuse engagement, and behavioural risk management plans. • Standardising license agreements and pre-eviction protocols across providers • Strengthening multi-agency collaboration and data-sharing to ensure continuity of care and rapid response through pre-eviction protocols and processes. <p>Outcome: Reduced evictions and homelessness among individuals in supported housing through early intervention, financial support, and coordinated behavioural risk management.</p>	3,4	<p><i>RSI Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>VCFS debt advice / tenancy sustainment support organisations</i></p>
2.11	<p>Prevent homelessness and rough sleeping among individuals leaving rehabilitation services by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing robust housing pathways to support transition from rehab into stable accommodation. • Implementing early intervention protocols during rehab, including housing planning, financial advice, and referral to ongoing support services. • Strengthening multi-agency collaboration between rehab providers, housing teams, and substance misuse services to ensure continuity of care and reduce repeat homelessness. <p>Outcome: Improved housing stability and reduced homelessness among individuals leaving rehabilitation through proactive planning and coordinated multi-agency support.</p>	3,4	<p><i>RSI Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>D&A services providers</i></p> <p><i>D&A commissioner</i></p> <p><i>Commissioned support providers</i></p>

2.12	<p>Improve communication on enforcement actions to prevent homelessness by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing and strengthening communication protocols with partners when enforcement measures (e.g., Closure Orders or environmental health interventions) are planned or imminent. • Ensuring timely alerts to housing and support services to enable early intervention. • Improving data-sharing agreements between enforcement agencies (such as Thames Valley Police), housing providers, and support services to maintain continuity of care and reduce repeat homelessness. <p>Outcome: Fewer homelessness cases caused by enforcement actions through proactive communication, early intervention, and coordinated multi-agency response.</p>	3,4	<p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>Thames Valley Police</i></p> <p><i>Community Safety</i></p> <p><i>Private Sector Housing Team</i></p>
2.13	<p>Support social landlords to prevent homelessness by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with landlords to identify early tenancy risks and ensure timely signposting to the Council for support and encouraging standardised pre-action/pre- eviction protocols. • Establishing a Registered Provider (RP) forum to strengthen collaboration and explore its role in delivering the strategy, including engaging with upcoming legislation regarding housing standards and homelessness prevention (Duty to Collaborate) and customer satisfaction feedback. • Improving data-sharing protocols between landlords, the Council, and partner agencies to maintain continuity of care and reduce repeat homelessness. • Encouraging cohesive approaches regarding pre-action/pre- eviction protocols. <p>Outcome: Earlier identification of tenancy risks and stronger coordination between social landlords and the Council, leading to fewer evictions and reduced homelessness approaches.</p>	2	<p><i>Homelessness Preventions Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>Registered Providers</i></p> <p><i>Strategic Housing Services Manager</i></p>
Ensure that housing-related support continues to play a key part in assisting with finding and maintaining suitable accommodation			
2.14	<p>Prioritise and recommission housing-related support: Focussing on preventing tenancy loss, providing resettlement support and finding alternative accommodation using data to target need and utilising available funding for maximum impact.</p> <p>Outcome: Reduced tenancy breakdowns and improved housing stability for individuals at risk of homelessness, ensuring timely access to appropriate accommodation and support.</p>	2	<p><i>RSI Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>Commissioned services</i></p>
2.15	<p>Promote supported accommodation and housing-related support to stakeholders as a tool for homelessness prevention and relief.</p> <p>Outcome: Faster intervention, reducing risk of homelessness for vulnerable individuals.</p>	2	<p><i>RSI Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>Statutory, non-statutory stakeholders, commissioned services</i></p>

Review how people access supported housing and housing related support and ensure that it meets needs now and, in the future

<p>2.16</p>	<p>Undertake review of existing outreach and supported accommodation services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustain a robust rough sleeping outreach service and, resource allowing, continue to deliver navigator and complex case worker roles • Explore the benefits of a one-stop-shop hub for health, homelessness and substance use for people rough sleeping and vulnerably housed, vs. current outreach models delivered in Reading. • Review referrals, needs, and provision to ensure services are fit for purpose. Balance efficiency with person-centred approaches. • Dependent on available funding and economies of scale, explore expansion of Housing First, smaller, self-contained units for people with complex needs, opportunities for more female-only units and the introduction of inclusive models (e.g. non-abstinence hostels and/or tiered recovery options) for people with ongoing substance use. • Explore the opportunity for reciprocal arrangements with neighbouring authorities to give customers who have support needs the opportunity for a ‘fresh start’. • Scope opportunities to joint commission with statutory services to maximise value for money. <p>Outcome: Services align with current and emerging needs, reducing gaps in provision. Services are streamlined yet responsive to individual needs and contribute to the Council’s prevention agenda and to reducing rough sleeping.</p>	<p>2,3</p>	<p><i>RSI Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>Statutory and non-statutory stakeholders</i></p> <p><i>Service users and those with lived experience</i></p>
<p>2.17</p>	<p>Strengthen move-on pathways from supported accommodation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review operation and outcomes of supported housing Progression Panel meetings to maximise positive and appropriate move-on outcomes. • Utilise pre-tenancy training and tenancy sustainment/tenancy rescue support to support transitions to independent living – preventing evictions, returns to rough sleeping and the need for recurring access to supported housing. • Include follow-up and feedback mechanisms for those who have moved on from supported accommodation to improve and develop offer. <p>Outcome: Reduced repeat homelessness and presentations in crisis, and improved tenancy retention.</p>	<p><i>Evaluation & Implementation</i> 2,3</p> <p><i>Feedback</i> 4</p>	<p><i>RSI Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>Commissioned support providers</i></p> <p><i>Service users and those with lived experience</i></p>

Develop and implement personalised and co-produced/peer-led services and support models

<p>2.18</p>	<p>Customer and stakeholder feedback: Seek the views of customers and stakeholders to review how Council and commissioned services are delivered and received, ensuring continuous improvement, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek feedback at the end of each customer’s homelessness or rough sleeping journey • Publicise success stories • Lead with a ‘you said, we did’ approach • Consider a ‘mystery shopper’ review with local authority peers and seek opportunities for subsequent cross-borough review <p>Outcome: Enhanced service quality and customer trust through transparent, responsive, and evidence-based improvements.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p><i>All Housing Needs Managers</i></p> <p><i>VCFS, non-statutory and statutory stakeholders</i></p> <p><i>Service users and those with lived experience</i></p> <p><i>Local authority peers</i></p>
<p>2.19</p>	<p>Develop personalised recovery plans and embed peer-led approaches to improve engagement and outcomes. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue development of Homelessness Lived Experience Forum • Scope the establishment of peer mentor schemes/networks for rough sleeping and homelessness in Reading • Develop peer mentorship and lived experience roles embedded in service design and delivery across Council and commissioned/contracted services • Create personalised and holistic PHPs covering housing, health, employment and social support goals <p>Outcome: Improved engagement, empowerment, and long-term stability for individuals through tailored and peer-supported interventions.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p><i>RSI Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>Service users and those with lived experience</i></p>

2.20	<p>Trauma informed practice and workforce development: Embed universal trauma-informed approaches for assessing and supporting complex and higher-need households experiencing multiple disadvantage and strengthen workforce capability. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train frontline housing staff on trauma-informed working (induction and annual refreshers) • Embed trauma-informed approaches across assessment and referral processes. • Train staff on hoarding, clutter, and chronic disorganisation to reduce homelessness risk. • Embed trauma-informed approaches across commissioned supported housing service specification requirements/monitoring and induction programmes. <p>Scope a cross-sector 'tell-us-once' assessment/passport tool for those accessing homelessness and rough sleeping services: This can be a barrier to accessing support and to avoid retraumatising vulnerable individuals who need help.</p> <p>Outcome: Improved service delivery that recognises and responds to trauma, reducing barriers to engagement and preventing homelessness for households with complex needs.</p>	3	<p><i>All Housing Needs Managers</i></p> <p><i>Organisational Development and Learning Team</i></p> <p><i>Commissioned homelessness services</i></p>
Improve pre-tenancy preparation to prevent cycles of homelessness			
2.21	<p>Develop and roll out pre-tenancy training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and implement a modular, accredited pre-tenancy training programme with partners. • Develop modules covering healthy relationships, emotional resilience, managing low-level mental health triggers, cultural integration for households from abroad, and practical tenancy skills. • Introduce tenancy readiness assessments as part of the training process. • Set annual training targets and monitor uptake. <p>Outcome: Improved tenancy readiness and community integration, reducing tenancy failures and repeat homelessness through proactive education and support.</p>	3,4	<p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>Rent Guarantee Scheme (RGS) Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>Commissioned homelessness services</i></p> <p><i>Service user and those with lived experience</i></p>
Improve financial resilience to prevent cycles of homelessness			
2.22	<p>Explore and promote employment opportunities for households at risk of homelessness: including access to education, training, and employment opportunities as a standard component in all Personalised Housing Plans, referring on to tenancy sustainment and employment support to ensure follow through.</p> <p>Outcome: Increased access to employment, training, and education for individuals at risk of homelessness. Improved housing stability through enhanced financial independence.</p>	2,3	<p><i>DWP</i></p> <p><i>Registered Providers</i></p> <p><i>Recovery College</i></p> <p><i>Work and Life Skills Centre</i></p>

2.23	<p>Improve financial inclusion and debt support by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving coordination and joint working with DWP and employment services to promote financial resilience and tenancy sustainment. Embedding financial advice, budgeting support, and debt management guidance within pre-tenancy planning and training. Facilitating access to essential financial tools by supporting individuals to set up bank accounts, secure identification documents, and explore affordable credit or savings options. Continuing to support households in receipt of UC by application for Alternative Payment Arrangements (APA) as appropriate particularly for people with complex and multiple needs. Providing signposting or direct access to accredited money advice services for those in financial difficulty. Monitoring seasonal spikes in possession claims and provide targeted financial assistance. Enhance data-sharing protocols between services to ensure continuity of care. <p>Outcome: Greater financial stability and inclusion for households, reducing risk of arrears, evictions, and homelessness through proactive financial planning, debt advice, and access to essential financial services.</p>	2,3	<p><i>All Housing Needs Managers</i></p> <p><i>DWP</i></p> <p><i>Registered Providers</i></p> <p><i>Recovery College</i></p> <p><i>Work and Life Skills Centre</i></p> <p><i>Debt Advice Team</i></p>
Respond to homelessness from the private rented sector			
2.24	<p>Update and find innovative ways to promote the Click Before you Evict website as an already established tool for landlords to use with their tenants when tenancies are at risk, responding to legislative change and providing a mechanism for landlords to refer in for support.</p> <p>Outcome: Earlier reporting of private sector tenancies at risk; maximised intervention from Council services where tenancies can be rescued.</p>	1	<p><i>RGS Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>RBC Housing Media & Communications Manager</i></p> <p><i>Private sector landlords</i></p>
2.25	<p>Establish fixed-term Tenancy Relations Officer role for landlord liaison, in response to legislative change and to make best use of new powers to challenge unlawful or retaliatory evictions, or legislative breaches, by taking legal action where necessary and serving Penalty Notices.</p> <p>Outcome: Reduction in unlawful evictions and breaches of new legislation</p>	1	<p><i>RGS Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>Private Sector Housing Team</i></p>

Strengthen rough sleeping housing pathways and multi-agency responses			
2.26	<p>Focus on practical support, stronger pathways, and coordinated multi-agency action to break cycles of rough sleeping, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering time-limited sit-up spaces to individuals found rough sleeping, regardless of local connection, while implementing assertive reconnection protocols. • Responding to street-based behaviours such as begging and anti-social activity through compassionate, multi-agency approaches. • Developing a coordinated approach to encampments, including proactive engagement with landowners and balancing support with enforcement. • Expanding complex caseworker roles for tenancy rescue and resettlement from outreach. • Scope the establishment of a multi-agency task group to develop improved routes into sustainable accommodation and support Reading's Target Priority Group. • Ensuring all people sleeping rough have a homelessness assessment recorded on HCLIC. • Revive quarterly Homelessness Partnership Forum meetings. • Scope review and re-print of street support services guide (originally launched 2020) <p>Outcome: Improved engagement and housing stability for people sleeping rough through practical support, expanded accommodation options, and coordinated multi-agency interventions – reducing repeat homelessness and promoting long-term recovery.</p>	<p><i>Ongoing</i></p> <p>1,2</p>	<p><i>RSI Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>Commissioned homelessness services</i></p>
Maximise funding opportunities to support homelessness prevention work			
2.27	<p>Maximise grant revenue funding opportunities from Government and other sources by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking out and applying for appropriate bids to fund homelessness prevention, tenancy sustainment, temporary accommodation, and specialist projects. • Researching and circulating funding opportunities to community, faith, and voluntary sector partners. • Ensuring timely permission is sought to bid for any new national funds the local authority is eligible for, including the £124m supported housing fund. • Aligning recommissioning cycles and any possible Housing First expansion with bid timelines to optimise success and value for money. <p>Outcome: Increased funding secured to expand and improve homelessness prevention initiatives, supported housing, and specialist services – resulting in greater capacity, improved accommodation standards and enhanced support for vulnerable households.</p>	<p><i>Ongoing</i></p> <p>1 - 5</p>	<p><i>RSI Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government</i></p> <p><i>Community, faith and voluntary partners</i></p>

Action	Year to be completed	Action owners	
3. Make sure everyone can access safe, settled, and affordable housing			
Accelerate response and placements for individuals new to rough sleeping to prevent them from becoming entrenched			
3.1	<p>Expand immediate ‘off the streets’ offer for those new to rough sleeping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen outreach offer and supported accommodation pathway, ensuring that all commissioned services are fit for purpose and meeting existing and future needs Build and commission 4 x bedspace NAPpad provision in Reading Continue Severe Weather Emergency Protocol responses and, where possible, prevent returns to the streets Continue to support VCFS winter shelter efforts to prevent returns to the streets and longer-term rough sleeping Explore opportunities for establishing secure lockers for those accessing off the streets accommodation and/or those rough sleeping and pending a housing offer <p>Outcome: Ensure people new to rough sleeping are offered immediate, safe accommodation and clear pathways into settled housing, preventing returns to the streets and long-term homelessness.</p>	1 Ongoing	RSI Team Manager
Reduce long-term rough sleeping in Reading Long-term rough sleeping is defined as individuals sleeping rough for 12+ months continuously, or with multiple episodes over 3 years despite engagement offers.			
3.2	<p>Increase move-on options from supported housing: Develop pathways for those sleeping rough long-term to transition from supported housing, and then to sustain settled accommodation.</p> <p>Scope options, within funding possibilities and opportunities, to increase temporary and permanent housing options outside of the traditional supported housing offer (e.g. increase Housing First, joint commissioning with Public Health and Adult Social Care) for people with multiple and complex needs, who are unable to live in multi-household environments and require more intensive support to sustain a tenancy.</p> <p>Outcome: Expand housing options so people with complex needs can transition from supported housing, or directly into, suitable, settled homes, improving tenancy sustainment.</p>	1,2,3	RSI Team Manager Commissioned services Public Health Adult Social Care

3.3	<p>Design, deliver, and evaluate a 4 – 5 bedspace ‘No First Night Out’ pilot in Reading: to ensure some individuals assessed under the Ending Rough Sleeping Risk Assessment Tool (ERSRAT), as being at risk of rough sleeping, are offered immediate accommodation and support, preventing street homelessness.</p> <p>Outcome: ‘No First Night Out’ pilot prevents some new rough sleeping by providing immediate accommodation and support, reducing long-term homelessness and increasing stakeholder awareness that customers do not need to be verified sleeping rough to receive assistance.</p>	1,2	<p><i>RSI Team Manager</i> <i>Homelessness Prevention Team Manager</i> <i>Housing Operations Manager</i> <i>VCFS sector partners</i></p>
3.4	<p>Engage with support and guidance from the National Plan to End Rough Sleeping:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access and implement the use of outreach and single homelessness/complex needs toolkits across the Rough Sleeping Initiatives Team and commissioned services for rough sleeping/those at risk of rough sleeping. • If required by MHCLG, co-produce a multi-year long-term rough sleeping partnership plan and annual targets with local partners to target long-term (entrenched) rough sleeping. • Continue monthly meeting to target multi-agency responses to the established Target Priority Group (TPG) comprising those who are defined as sleeping rough longer-term. <p>Outcome: National guidance and toolkits are embedded locally, ensuring consistent, evidence-based practice and coordinated multi-agency responses to long-term rough sleeping, supported by a formal partnership plan and measurable annual targets.</p>	<p><i>Pending toolkit publication</i> <i>n</i> 1,2</p>	<p><i>RSI Team Manager</i> MHCLG <i>Statutory partners and commissioned services</i></p>
Ensure sufficient Emergency and Temporary Accommodation capacity, with placements that meet need and demand			
3.5	<p>Implement a data-driven system to monitor emergency accommodation placements and demand and respond proactively by adjusting capacity and placement strategies: Build a shared dashboard and monthly reporting cycle (with daily operational views) that tracks referrals, acceptances, refusals, length of stay, family placements, out-of-area moves, and unit availability. Use forecasting (e.g., seasonal trends, SWEP triggers, hospital/prison discharge data) and agreed escalation thresholds to activate surge capacity and maintain alignment with assessed need and demand.</p> <p>Outcome: A data-driven system ensures emergency and temporary accommodation capacity meets need and demand through proactive adjustments and accurate forecasting.</p>	1	<p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i> <i>Housing Operations Manager</i> RGS Team Manager Data and Performance Teams / Lead</p>

3.6	<p>Outline and adopt an Emergency and Temporary Accommodation procurement and placement strategy: Establish a strategic EA procurement project led by Housing Needs management and a dedicated EA Strategy Project Group, to review current contracts, explore all compliant procurement options (including frameworks, existing assets such as LAHF acquisitions, and leasing), and develop a governance-approved plan to increase and secure cost-effective, good quality, fit-for-purpose emergency and temporary accommodation with a focus on improving our customer's emergency and temporary accommodation experience (quality and management standards, minimising disruption to health care and education, avoiding multiple moves and out of area placements).</p> <p>Outcome: A strategy that secures cost-effective, high-quality emergency and temporary accommodation, improving customer experience and reducing disruption and out-of-area placements, aiming to reduce emergency and temporary accommodation costs and respond to fluctuations in demand.</p>	1	<p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>RGS Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>Procurement Team</i></p> <p><i>Legal Services</i></p> <p><i>Strategic Housing Service Manager</i></p>
3.7	<p>Emergency and Temporary Accommodation placements are lawful and considered by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring allocations of temporary accommodation are made with forethought and in partnership with community safety, support partners, NPS/CRC, considering immediate neighbours, those vulnerable to exploitation or known to exploit, previous offending and/or anti-social behaviours. • Continuing to place families in self-contained properties from the outset • Providing safe accommodation options for households fleeing domestic abuse <p>Outcome: Placements are lawful, safe, and appropriate, minimising risk.</p>	Ongoing	<p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>RGS Team Manager</i></p>
<p>Ensure households remain in cost-effective Emergency and Temporary Accommodation for the shortest period possible</p>			
3.8	<p>Ensure that all Emergency Accommodation placements are best value while maintaining quality standards by continuing to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out initial and six-monthly inspections of placements, collecting compliance certificates up front and maintaining a daily updated list of available properties. • Negotiate lowest possible prices on nightly paid accommodation while ensuring quality and management remain appropriate. • Place households in the lowest cost Emergency Accommodation which meets their needs, regularly reviewing and re-negotiating high cost and longer placements with individual providers and considering moves to lower cost accommodation if re-negotiation of the nightly rate is unsuccessful, while minimising disruption to households wherever possible. <p>Outcome: All Emergency Accommodation placements are of suitable quality, at the best price.</p>	Ongoing	<p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>RGS Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>Private Sector Housing Team</i></p>

3.9	<p>Achieve consistent Temporary Accommodation throughput by working with households from the outset of placement to understand their needs and manage expectations, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing clear messages within PHPs regarding their move-on plan and continual contact and review whilst in placement • Full utilisation of the number of properties available under the borough's allocations plan for those moving on from temporary accommodation into social housing • Reviewing outcomes and repeat homelessness reasons and risks from temporary accommodation move-on • Evaluating outcomes of Homelessness Prevention Team Pilot (started March 2025) • Utilising local housing authority powers to move people on from temporary accommodation so that it is available for households when needed – focusing on people not engaging with payment and support • Using a % of register lets for homeless households <p>Outcome: Consistent throughput in temporary accommodation is achieved by engaging households early, setting clear move-on plans, and fully utilising available housing options – freeing capacity for those in need.</p>	Ongoing 1,2	<p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>Legal Services</i></p> <p><i>Voids and Lettings Team Lead</i></p>
Regularly review how we procure enough private sector housing for homeless households			
3.10	<p>Continue to undertake regular analysis of supply and demand factors to accurately determine demand and inform procurement strategy for current private sector provision for the Rent Guarantee Scheme (RGS) as well as properties secured via Prevention Fund, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers/households approaching the service including needs and family composition • Local market research and evaluation of the impact of specific local factors on supply (university impact on property availability, high local rents, • National market intelligence supported by research (NRLA, Shelter and others) • Anticipated and actual impact of national legislative and local policy change on landlord and tenant behaviour (including Renter's Rights Act 2025, Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023, selective and additional licensing) <p>Outcome: Maximisation of properties procured for household types and sizes in greatest need.</p>	Ongoing 1	<p><i>RGS Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>Homelessness Prevention Team Managers</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p>

3.11	<p>Review the Council's Rent Guarantee Scheme (RGS) offer in the light of changes brought by the Renter's Rights Act by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering existing legal agreements and process for ending them where required • Continuing to review and promote suitable incentives to bridge the gap between LHA and market rent • Continuing to consider how households are matched to landlords/properties, including where a 'one household, one viewing' approach is appropriate and where customer/landlord relationships are better established from the beginning by offering multiple viewers. • Continuing to maximise engagement opportunities with private sector landlords to promote the Scheme, including advertising and identifying opportunities associated with increased landlord regulation (Renter's Rights Act 2025). <p>Outcome: Maximisation of properties procured by RGS and retention of existing RGS properties on the Scheme, achieving move-on from emergency and temporary accommodation and best use of available funds.</p>	Ongoing 1	<p><i>RGS Team Manager</i> <i>Legal Services</i> <i>Private sector landlords</i></p>
Continue to provide information, advice and support for landlords			
3.12	<p>Engage with private sector landlords to position the Council as a trusted information and service provider, by continuing with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops and pre-tenancy training for all prospective Rent Guarantee Scheme tenants • Providing advice and education to private sector landlords and tenants, including via Landlord Information events, promoting Council services and encouraging early contact where tenancies are at risk • Working in partnership with the National Residential Landlords Association (NRLA) to access national and local market data and trends analysis, as well as training opportunities for landlords and staff • Promoting Council and national initiatives in the private sector, including energy efficiency grant schemes, licencing of HMOs plus new selective and additional licensing online, Reading's Rent with Confidence Scheme and Private Sector Housing on-line advice and content, to educate and support landlords • Working in partnership with other Council teams and services to facilitate landlord engagement and provide private tenancy expertise • Developing landlord understanding of the support and needs of those moving on from supported accommodation or from care to encourage early notification and intervention, exploring the idea of a 'Tenant Passport' • Supporting Reading University engagement with student landlords, relevant property standards and student rights as tenants <p>Outcome: Continued close engagement with private sector landlords, increased landlord compliance with new and existing legislation and improvement in property standards.</p>	Ongoing 1	<p><i>RGS Team Manager</i> <i>Debt Advice Team</i> <i>Environmental Health</i> <i>Private Sector Housing team</i> <i>Private sector landlords</i> <i>Reading University</i> <i>NRLA</i></p>

Continue developing more affordable housing as a priority for the Council			
3.13	<p>Ensure support for continued prioritisation of affordable housing under the Council's Housing Strategy: Collaborate with Strategic Housing colleagues to provide data to inform their work with developers and housing associations to expand affordable housing delivery – prioritising social rent, accessible homes, and innovative models, including their work in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiating with developers to maximise social rent, affordable rental models (e.g. Build to Rent) and accessible units in new developments. • Expanding the Council's own affordable housing stock through new builds. • Piloting modular and repurposed housing solutions to meet emergency and transitional accommodation needs. 	<i>Ongoing</i>	<p><i>Housing Needs Managers</i></p> <p><i>Strategic Housing Team</i></p> <p><i>Legal</i></p> <p><i>Registered Providers</i></p> <p><i>Housing developers</i></p>
Implement and embed Allocations Scheme revisions			
3.14	<p>Review and refine the Allocations Scheme in accordance with legislative and local changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update the Allocations Scheme annually to reflect changing needs and ensure fairness. • Review and refine the Allocations Scheme to reflect new legislation and national policies/strategies • Review of all local lettings policies aiming to improve neighbourhoods and manage behaviours on our estates. • Continue robust checks regarding customer readiness when moving into social rented properties through the Council's quota queues (care leavers, adult social care, rough sleeping, Housing First, supported accommodation move-on). <p>Outcome: Allocations Scheme is regularly updated to ensure fair access to safe, settled, and affordable housing, with readiness checks for priority groups to support successful tenancies.</p>	<i>Ongoing</i> 1	<p><i>Housing Needs Service Manager</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>Voids and Lettings Team Leader</i></p>
3.15	<p>Adaptations and housing suitability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate adapted housing register outcomes and effectiveness in identifying properties for adaptation or reallocation. • Review the effectiveness of housing stock with underused adaptations, in partnership with DFG teams. • Review the effectiveness of the campaign to promote downsizing for under-occupiers with incentives and media campaigns. <p>Outcome: Improve access to larger family homes and adapted homes ensuring best use of existing stock.</p>	<i>Ongoing</i> 1	<p><i>Housing Needs Service Manager</i></p> <p><i>Housing Operations Manager</i></p> <p><i>Housing Adaptations and Grants Manager</i></p>

Maximise opportunities to support and signpost homeless households without recourse to public funds			
3.16	<p>Develop and implement a multi-agency approach to support households without recourse to public funds by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustaining case contact with Children’s Social Care, preparing families for transition when recourse is obtained, and increasing early Homelessness Prevention Team involvement. • Strengthening partnerships with community, faith, and voluntary sectors to secure funding and deliver culturally responsive housing pathways, including the exploration of community-led models (e.g., Refugees at Home, Homes for Ukraine). • Scoping and, if resourcing allows, rolling out a training programme for professionals and volunteers on signposting, entitlements, cultural needs, and health support to improve outcomes for non-UK nationals and diverse communities. <p>Outcome: Households without recourse to public funds receive timely, culturally responsive support and clear housing pathways, reducing time spent in emergency accommodation and improving successful transitions into safe, settled housing.</p>	<p><i>Ongoing</i></p> <p>2,3</p>	<p><i>All Housing Needs Managers</i></p> <p><i>Children’s Social Care</i></p> <p><i>VCFS partners</i></p>
Maintain effective relationships with MHCLG and other relevant Government departments			
3.17	<p>Sustain relationships and dialogue with MHCLG and other central government departments by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feed up local challenges and barriers (e.g. advocate for Local Housing Allowance reform, to better reflect actual rent levels in Reading), achievements, hear best practice that can translate to Reading, innovate approaches to service delivery and cost savings. • Embrace opportunities for review and deep dives and recommendations for improvements and implement resultant action plans from these efforts. <p>Outcome: Engagement with central government supports the delivery of safe, settled, and affordable housing in Reading by influencing policy (e.g., LHA reform), adopting best practice, and implementing review-driven improvements to remove barriers and enhance housing access.</p>	<p><i>Ongoing</i></p>	<p><i>RSI Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>Housing Needs Service Manager</i></p>

Review of Reading's previous homelessness and rough sleeping strategies

Section 1: Review of Reading's Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2020 – 2025

Overview

Reading's Homelessness Strategy 2020 – 2025 focused on three priorities: intervening early to prevent and reduce homelessness, supporting people who are vulnerable to recurring homelessness and increasing access to decent, suitable accommodation. This review summarises progress and key learning to inform future strategic direction.

Intervening early to prevent and reduce homelessness: Summary of key achievements

- Launched a fully revised Allocations Scheme, providing a more transparent and accurate reflection of verified housing need, including the introduction of a split housing register to better match adapted properties to applicants.
- Strengthened early intervention and prevention activity by delivering a six-month pilot focusing on upstream prevention and facilitating move-on from temporary accommodation. Improved data collection to better understand the reasons for homelessness presentations and identified households for outreach activity via LIFT dashboard campaigns.
- Delivered targeted outreach by establishing Young Person's and Mental Health Homelessness Specialisms, strengthening partnerships, improving referral pathways, and promoting use of the Duty to Refer.
- Improved online resources and engagement for customers and partners by redeveloping the Rent Guarantee Scheme (RGS) and Homelessness sections of the Council website, adding multilingual functionality, self-service tools, and informative videos for customers and agencies. Launched the "Click Before You Evict" website, offering practical resources for landlords and tenants to prevent evictions.
- Began the digital transformation of Housing Needs services, to improve customer accessibility, by launching the Housing Online platform.
- Introduced a Power BI platform to allow better manager and team oversight of key metrics, improving responsiveness, enabling more efficient case working and offering opportunity to identify and target trends in demand as they arise.

Supporting people who are vulnerable to recurring homelessness: Summary of key achievements

- Sustained private sector tenancies by delivering tenancy support via in-house and commissioned grant-funded interventions, enhanced the RGS incentive programme to address the gap between Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and market rents, enabling tenancies to be re-signed for a further fixed term, and strengthened collaboration with the teams who administer Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to maximise grant utilisation.

- Transferred emergency accommodation procurement to the RGS team, improving quality and value for money, introduced compliance tracking and streamlined spot-purchase processes to support homelessness prevention and SWEP responses.
- Enhanced homelessness intervention and support for vulnerable groups by launching the Accommodation for Ex-Offenders (AfEO) initiative, creating a Refugee and Asylum Team to respond to rising demand and expanding housing priority, forward planning, and multi-service collaboration for Care Leavers.
- Strengthened collaboration across services by establishing homelessness participation in multi-agency panels including MARAC, MAPPA, Safeguarding Adults Board, and the Complex Adults Panel.

Increasing access to decent, suitable accommodation: Summary of key achievements

- Improved access to suitable, affordable housing by introducing the Adapted Housing Register, integrating the Disabled Facilities Grants Team into Housing Needs, supporting under occupying households to downsize, delivering new housing developments, and securing Build-to-Rent units for homeless households.
- Enhanced the provision of safe, cost-effective temporary accommodation by exploring block-booking arrangements to reduce costs and improve standards and acquiring LAHF properties to expand temporary accommodation options.
- Engaged the private rented sector and improved landlord relations by refining the RGS offer and incentives in response to market trends and upcoming legislation (Renter’s Rights Bill) and delivering landlord engagement activities including the annual Landlord Evening and the Click Before You Evict website.
- Improved access to accommodation for young people via a homelessness prevention specialist role and joint working with partner agencies, focussing on transition planning.

Full review of objectives, achievements, and actions to take forward to 2025 – 30

Priority 1: Intervening Early to Prevent and Reduce Homelessness in Reading

We must develop an approach that provides universal awareness of homelessness within the wider community and ensure that this reaches a breadth of households.

Our objective was to...

... enable residents and communities to identify their own risks of homelessness. We want trigger points on the pathway to homelessness to be within the consciousness of people and professionals in Reading and aim to embed a systemic corporate approach underpinned by Team Reading within the Council.

Universal approaches
Aims:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create and adopt a full Communications Plan to promote a Homelessness Prevention Service that is visible and instils confidence.• Maximise customer access to Homelessness Prevention services.• Deliver general and bespoke training to upskill and educate statutory sector, faith, voluntary and community partners around homelessness.• Support primary healthcare partners to identify homelessness risk and refer into the Service.• Improve existing partnerships and joint working with admittance and discharge teams at the Royal Berkshire Hospital and Prospect Park Hospitals.

Achievements and how:

- Completed a comprehensive audit of allocations, leading to the successful launch of a fully revised Allocations Scheme which is both more transparent for customers and also a more accurate reflection and appropriate prioritisation of verified housing need. Introduced a split housing register, distinguishing between General Needs and Adapted Housing, to optimise the use of adapted properties and better match applicants with verified needs.
- Transitioned the Choice-Based Lettings process to the Housing Online platform, enhancing digital access to services.
- Reviewed Reading's Allocations Plan to keep it responsive to local demand, resulting in increased lets to homeless households. Continued to utilise and annually review the quota queues, liaising with wider services to identify need and establish referral processes.
- Supported Adult Social Care to move customers from supported housing placements to general needs stock via a panel and quota queue approach.
- Introduced the Power BI platform to allow better manager and team oversight of key metrics such as caseloads and deadlines, rolled out to the Homelessness Prevention Team.
- Redeveloped the RGS and Homelessness sections of the Council website, as part of the customer journey optimisation project, to improve accessibility and engagement, including the creation of informative videos illustrating common homelessness scenarios and explaining how the RGS process operates, and also a dedicated section for partner agencies to access training materials and request support. These website enhancements support both customer and agency self-service, with multilingual functionality enabling instant translation into dozens of languages.
- Developed the "Click Before You Evict" website, offering downloadable fact sheets and translatable videos for landlords and tenants, providing guidance on managing tenancy risks and preventing eviction.
- Reviewed and updated customer-facing literature, including the creation of A Guide to Homelessness Prevention booklet.
- Actively promoted the Duty to Refer across all partner organisations to strengthen early intervention pathways.
- Established a Mental Health Homelessness Prevention specialist role, carrying out weekly outreach visits to Prospect Park Hospital and strengthening partnerships with mental health services.
- Conducted landlord and tenant surveys within the Rent Guarantee Scheme (RGS) to gather feedback on service delivery, processes, and overall customer experience.

Suggested actions to take forward to 2025 – 30:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive Communications Plan to promote the Homelessness Prevention Service, building on existing digital platforms and outreach materials to ensure visibility and trust.
- Continue to expand digital access and self-service functionality for homelessness services, consolidating the Housing Online platform and going live with the digital Personalised Housing Plan.
- Strengthen collaboration with primary healthcare providers, building on the success of the Mental Health Homelessness Prevention specialist role to fully embed Duty to Refer use.
- Enhance joint working with hospital discharge teams at Royal Berkshire and Prospect Park Hospitals, to ensure timely and coordinated support for patients at risk of homelessness.

Targeted upstream interventions

Aim:

- Continue to commission *Policy in Practice* Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) dashboard.
- Reframe analysis away from the most recent homelessness reason to consider wider factors.
- Continue to provide homelessness advice and information within community and homelessness sector settings.
- Continue to support vulnerable households with moving to Universal Credit.
- Pilot awareness sessions in schools, colleges, universities, and youth services.

Achievements and how:

- Utilised the LIFT dashboard to strategically allocate Winter Pressures funding, targeting low-income households identified as being in rent arrears.
- Tested the effectiveness of an Early Intervention Team as part of the Homelessness Prevention Team six month Pilot, carrying out upstream prevention activities including outreach campaigns determined using LIFT dashboard data and focussing officer time on achieving move on from temporary accommodation.
- Embedded Personalised Housing Plans (PHP) as a core practice following the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act, ensuring tailored support for individuals at risk.
- Established a young person's homelessness specialism role, delivering targeted outreach at YMCA facilities and attending drop-in sessions at the Salvation Army.
- Promoted community cohesion by using a revised sensitive lets process to make offers of social housing, in response to social concerns raised in specific neighbourhoods.
- Enhanced the management transfer process for residents who had gained succession rights to unsuitable social housing, ensuring access to an alternative and suitable offer of accommodation.
- Successfully supported the transition of RGS tenants and Housing Needs clients from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit, with dedicated assistance provided by the Money Advisor to ensure financial stability and continuity of housing.

Suggested actions to take forward to 2025 – 30:

- Continue commissioning and expanding use of the LIFT dashboard to identify households at risk and inform targeted prevention and early intervention strategies, aiming to identify the origin of homelessness presentations and expanding homelessness advice provision in community settings, including supporting the Launchpad Drop In, to access individuals at an earlier stage.
- Broaden homelessness analysis beyond identification of the presenting reason, reviewing the whole customer journey and identifying where earlier intervention might have been possible, embedding a holistic understanding of all the factors contributing to or triggering homelessness into assessments and service planning.
- Pilot targeted homelessness awareness sessions in educational settings, including schools, colleges, universities, and youth services, to promote understanding and knowledge of homelessness triggers and available support, and enable early identification and prevention. Build on the Young Person's Homelessness Specialism to explore further engagement opportunities with education and youth networks.

Priority 2: Supporting people who are vulnerable to recurring homelessness in Reading

We must develop an approach that provides universal awareness of homelessness within the wider community and ensure that this reaches a breadth of households.

Our objective was to...

... provide exceptional housing-related support for independent living that can effectively identify additional needs and signpost to services that can support with relationship breakdown, domestic abuse, mental ill-health problems, drug and alcohol dependency, poverty, debt, and unemployment.

Supported sustainment

Aim:

- Ensure that housing-related support continues to play a key part in assisting with finding and maintaining suitable accommodation.
- Review most effective way to deliver housing related support – in house versus commissioned.
- Develop and roll-out a holistic modular/accredited pre-tenancy training programme with partners.
- Review how people access supported accommodation and ensure that it meets needs now and, in the future.
- Work alongside Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC) in preparing care leavers for independent living.
- Prevent the cycle of mental health discharge, readmittance and risk of homelessness.
- Continue to maximise our grant revenue funding opportunities from Government.

Achievements and how:

- Tenancy Sustainment support continues to be available for council tenants, helping to prevent tenancy breakdown and homelessness, plus a Tenancy Preparation Programme for council tenants was developed and implemented to improve readiness and long-term housing outcomes.
- Out-of-Hours Tenancy Sustainment Support introduced through grant funding, specifically targeting individuals with a history of rough sleeping from 2021 – 2023, and continued to deliver short term cross-tenure tenancy sustainment support via Launchpad.
- Delivered RGS workshops offering practical guidance on accessing private rented sector accommodation.
- Utilised grant-funded Environmental Health videos to educate tenants and landlords on property condition standards and responsibilities.
- Faced reductions in funding across contracted supported accommodation services, increasing reliance on short-term grants and limited Council-funded provision. This has caused challenges in aligning service review and renewal cycles due to uncertainty around future funding streams.

- Improved homelessness prevention for those leaving care by introducing a dedicated care leavers quota queue on the Housing Register to prioritise access to housing and establishing a Joint Working Protocol for care leavers, enhancing multi-agency collaboration. Initiated regular care leavers meetings attended by homelessness services, enabling proactive planning before individuals turn 18 and improving transition outcomes. Conducted regular outcome reviews with BFfC to identify learning and improve service delivery for care leavers. Established homelessness services' representation on the Preparation for Adulthood Panel to identify housing needs early and plan appropriate interventions and streamlined referral processes into Launchpad for care leavers through a simplified form. RGS Money Advisor provided tailored financial advice sessions to care leavers preparing for independent living.
- Reactively responded to and supported arrivals of unaccompanied minors via refugee and asylum seeker routes.
- Established a Mental Health Homelessness Prevention specialist role, with assessments conducted at Prospect Park Hospital to support individuals with complex needs.
- Successfully launched the grant-funded Accommodation for Ex-Offenders initiative, securing sustained private rented sector accommodation for former offenders, including the creation of two dedicated Transitions Officer posts to support individuals from prison release through to stable accommodation, providing six months of tenancy sustainment support.
- Acquired properties through the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) to be used as temporary accommodation for refugee households, including larger family-sized homes.

Suggested actions to take forward to 2025 – 30:

- Review before recommissioning housing-related support services, ensuring they are accessible, effective, and tailored to help individuals find and sustain accommodation, achieving a balance between efficiency and person-centred approach.
- Review the delivery model for tenancy sustainment, evaluating the benefits of in-house provision versus commissioned services to ensure continuity and quality.
- Develop and roll out a programme to upskill clients threatened with homelessness to find property in the private sector, building on the RGS workshop.
- Strengthen partnership working with Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC) to support care leavers, particularly those aged 16-17, including early planning and financial advice, via the Young Person's specialism role. Continue to work collaboratively to end intentionally homeless decisions for care leavers.
- Continue to develop mental health homelessness prevention pathways via the Mental Health specialism role, reducing the risk of discharge-readmittance cycles through hospital-based assessments and coordinated support.
- Continue to develop health-homelessness prevention pathways, rolling out a joint working protocol for hospital discharge.
- Maximise opportunities to secure and utilise grant funding, including for specialist projects, temporary accommodation, and tenancy sustainment initiatives, including the NAPpads, a review of the AfEO scheme and the Test and Learn initiative, responding to the challenge of grants being increasingly homogenised, seeking to improve information sharing and contact across different teams and services to facilitate creative opportunities for collaboration.

Pre-Crisis Intervention

Aim:

- Continue existing, well established preventative practices under our Homelessness Reduction Act prevention duties.
- Promote planned move-on options for those vulnerable to friend and family evictions.
- Better understand the reasons behind relationship breakdown.
- Continue to respond to homelessness from the private rented sector.
- Improve communication when enforcement action is planned or imminent.
- Embed universal trauma informed approaches for assessing and supporting complex and higher need households that may be experiencing multiple disadvantage.

Achievements and how:

- Undertook significant preparation for the rollout of the Digital Personalised Housing Plan, enhancing accessibility and efficiency of support planning.
- Introduced stricter procedures for conducting homelessness home visits, improving consistency and safeguarding.
- Gained deeper insight into homelessness presentations linked to relationship breakdown, which is no longer a top five reason for presentations due to improved data categorisation. Enhanced data collection practices now distinguish between family breakdown and domestic abuse, allowing for more accurate analysis and targeted interventions.
- Strategically deployed the Prevention Fund to rescue and secure private rented tenancies at risk.
- Expanded the ability of the RGS to procure private sector accommodation with an incentive programme – initially funded through Winter Pressures, now embedded in the annual budget – to create and sustain tenancies, addressing the gap between Local Housing Allowance and market rents.
- Strengthened collaboration with the Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) team to maximise grant utilisation and respond to shared pressures.
- Used the LIFT dashboard to identify households for upstream prevention work.
- Maintained a three-day-a-week Launchpad drop-in service to support individuals at risk of homelessness.
- Hosted an annual RGS Landlord Evening to engage the private rented sector, promote Council services, and share homelessness prevention messages.
- Introduced a streamlined process for spot-purchased emergency accommodation, reducing pressure on frontline teams and supporting Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) responses.
- Employed grant-funded Private Rented Tenancy Sustainment Officers for a fixed term to support tenancy retention.
- Formed a dedicated Asylum and Refugee Team in response to rising homelessness demand among displaced populations.
- Established the active participation of Homelessness Prevention Officers and RGS staff in the Complex Adults Panel to support individuals facing enforcement action.
- Strengthened cross-team collaboration between RGS, Rents, Housing Advice, and Environmental Health.

- Contributed to multi-agency panels including MARAC, MAPPA, Safeguarding Adults Board, and the Preparing for Adulthood Board.
- Developed processes to challenge negative decisions and support individuals on the rough sleeping list during appeals.
- All RGS procurement team members are trained in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), using it to identify Category 1 and 2 hazards during property inspections.
- Fostered links between RGS and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to support employment pathways.
- Supported Launchpad's Work & Life Skills Centre to promote independence and resilience.
- Established an Early Intervention Team through a pilot programme to identify and address risks earlier.
- Leveraged the LIFT dashboard to identify and respond to worklessness as a contributing factor to homelessness.

Suggested actions to take forward to 2025 – 30:

- Continue to digitalise Homelessness Reduction Act prevention duties, including the use of Digital Personalised Housing Plans and HOOPS forms, streamlined through the adoption of Magic Notes. Roll out Magic Notes functionality to additional areas, including the Common Assessment Form, to support consistency and reduce administrative burden.
- Promote planned move-on options for individuals vulnerable to friend and family evictions, using upstream prevention models and targeted support.
- Use improved data collection and analysis to better understand presentation reasons, including the nuanced causes of relationship breakdown, now separated from domestic abuse and family breakdown.
- Review the effectiveness of the Homelessness Prevention Pilot, incorporating learning into future service design and delivery.
- Continue to engage with the private rented sector, monitoring and responding to upcoming Renter's Rights Bill changes, temperature testing landlord motivations and using market insights to shape future interventions and incentives, particularly considering the revision of the RGS offer to maintain the scheme's attractiveness.
- Explore the use of the welfare band on the Housing Register to support households at risk of homelessness, preventing temporary accommodation placements while ensuring this remains a short-term, strategic tool.
- Review access to supported accommodation to ensure it meets current and future needs, in light of the Supported Housing Regulatory Oversight Act and feedback from the Rough Sleeping Deep Dive.
- Monitor and respond to the impact of new Selective and Additional Licensing requirements to promote housing quality and compliance across the private rented sector, while maximising property procurement.
- Continue to develop trauma-informed approaches to homelessness prevention activities, including a full roll out of reflective supervision for internal teams and commissioned services, embedding person-centred practice into interview skills training and onboarding programmes. Offer training on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and their impact on homelessness cycles.

- Improve connections with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to identify support pathways and employment opportunities for homeless households. Utilise the RGS Money Advisor to provide targeted intervention to maximise household income and financial resilience.
- Explore and strengthen existing links between the Money Advice Team and employment services to promote financial resilience and tenancy sustainment.
- Promote a One Directorate approach, sharing training, resources, and expertise across teams to improve service integration and outcomes.
- Improve use of Multi-Agency Risk Management frameworks to support individuals with complex needs and reduce repeat homelessness.
- Establish better relationships with the Home Office, using decision lists and our understanding of shortened decision-making timescales to plan housing responses for asylum seekers and refugees.
- Develop the housing needs workforce by fully delivering reflective supervision training and embedding trauma-informed approaches across services, promoting a person-centred approach. Ensure commissioned services adopted reflective supervision as standard practice. Develop training programmes and induction plans to include shadowing external teams and service providers.

Priority 3: Increasing access to decent, suitable accommodation.

We will relieve and prevent homelessness by enabling residents to access secure and suitable accommodation that they can call home.

Our objective was to...

... increase housing supply to avoid use of emergency temporary accommodation and improve the standards of accommodation for new and existing tenants that approach our Homelessness Prevention Service. Given what we know about Reading's housing market, our focus will primarily be within the private rented sector.

Provision of accommodation and crisis intervention

Aim:

- Advocate that homelessness is not just about provision of 'bricks and mortar.'
- Continue existing practices under Homelessness Reduction Act relief duties.
- Ensure that the provision of temporary accommodation is adequate in meeting the needs of any growing pressures.
- Regularly review how we procure enough private sector housing for homeless households.
- Continue to provide information, advice, and support for landlords.
- Continue developing more affordable housing as a priority for the Council.
- Implement revised Allocations Scheme by 2021/22.
- Review and develop accommodation and support for those aged 16 – 24.
- Scope and implement a permanent site/pitch for the gypsy and traveller community.
- Maximise opportunities to support and signpost homeless households without recourse to public funds.

Achievements and how:

- Emphasised a person-centred approach to homelessness prevention, focusing not only on accommodation but on understanding the root causes of previous tenancy failure and putting measures in place to prevent recurrence.
- Delivered a six-month pilot of the Homelessness Prevention Team, focusing on upstream prevention and facilitating move-on pathways by clearing systemic blockages.
- Established Housing Needs representation within the Safeguarding Adults Board to strengthen multi-agency collaboration.
- Integrated the Disabled Facilities Grants Team into the Housing Needs Service, enabling more cohesive support for individuals with accessibility needs, with Occupational Therapists available to assess the needs of homeless households, ensuring appropriate adaptations and placements. This enables optimised use of grant funding to adapt both private rented and social housing stock to meet evolving accessibility requirements.
- Implemented a revised Allocations Scheme to better reflect local housing priorities and needs, and finalised Allocations quota queues and move-on processes to improve flow through supported and temporary accommodation.

- Transferred emergency accommodation procurement responsibilities to the RGS team, reducing pressure on the homelessness prevention team and improving quality of accommodation and value for money. The team established a six-monthly inspection programme for emergency accommodation to ensure standards are maintained, introducing compliance tracking covering gas and electrical safety, Energy Performance Certificates, and HMO licences where applicable. Delivered value-for-money moves within nightly paid accommodation by transitioning from higher-cost placements to more affordable options.
- Completed a tender process for block-booking 1- and 2-bedroom emergency accommodation units at favourable rates.
- Improved forecasting of homelessness 'upcoming demand' to reduce reliance on emergency placements and maximise use of RGS and temporary accommodation, and improved tracking of homelessness themes and trends to inform service planning.
- Monitored upcoming private rented sector legislation and engaged landlords in preparation for the Renter's Rights Bill, carrying out rent snapshots and surveys to understand market trends, set RGS incentive payments and review and refine the RGS offer to ensure relevance and appeal.
- Created a Refugee and Asylum Team to respond to Home Office changes and increasing demand.
- Acquired properties through the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) to expand temporary accommodation options.
- Established a Suitability Inspections process for Prevention Fund payments, ensuring safe and compliant accommodation.
- Appointed a dedicated officer to support under occupying households to downsize, supported by a revised incentive package.
- Delivered an annual Landlord Evening to promote Council services and homelessness prevention initiatives.
- Employed a fixed-term, grant-funded Tenancy Relations Officer to support landlord-tenant relationships.
- Launched the Click Before You Evict website and associated publicity campaign to raise awareness of support resources for landlords and tenants.
- Refreshed the Council website to focus on landlord and tenant resources, improving accessibility and self-service.
- Delivered new housing developments at Arthur Hill, Green Park, and Wensley Road.
- Successfully negotiated making Build-to-Rent schemes available to homeless households via the RGS.
- Reviewed provision for 18-24 year olds by establishing a Young Persons Homelessness Specialism role, including monthly outreach visits to YMCA, extending YMCA nomination rights to increase access for young people, and increasing the Leaving Care Queue in response to rising demand.
- Strengthened partnership working with the Leaving Care Team to support transitions.
- Responded to the COVID-19 Everybody In initiative by accommodating rough sleepers and continuing support post-pandemic.

Suggested actions to take forward to 2025 – 30:

- Continue to advocate that homelessness is not solely about housing, embedding trauma-informed, person-centred approaches across all services.
- Explore how we might better identify and respond at an earlier stage to hidden homelessness, including people sofa surfing and people experiencing housing instability due to domestic abuse.
- Continue to monitor and respond to demand for emergency accommodation, using forecasting tools and LAHF acquisitions to reduce reliance on nightly paid options, scoping private sector leasing models as alternatives, including cost modelling and value-for-money analysis. Maintain compliance tracking and inspection regimes for emergency accommodation.
- Continue to respond to the Renter's Rights Bill, establishing a new Tenancy Relations Officer role to undertake prevention activity and monitor compliance.
- Continue to act as a source of advice and support for private sector landlords, re-launching and promoting the updated Click Before you Evict website and focussing landlord events on topics of primary concern, contributing to forging better links between landlords and Council teams whose services they utilise, promoting the RGS and delivering homelessness prevention messaging.
- Continue to review and refine the Allocations Scheme, including making necessary adjustments to accommodate the Domestic Abuse Act and Armed Forces Covenant.
- Continue to review the adapted housing register, identifying properties suitable for adaptation in partnership with Registered Providers and target properties within Reading housing stock where tenants no longer require the adaptations in their home.
- Maximise the supply of affordable housing by continuing to support under occupiers to downsize, with revised incentive packages and media campaigns, signing contracts with Registered Providers to establish nominations agreements and exploring further private sector Build-to-Rent opportunities for homeless households.
- Expand support for 16–24 year olds, by developing a Young Person's Hub as a focus of early intervention activity. Create a toolkit for this cohort to include tenancy training and CV writing skills. Collaborate with secondary schools and youth services in delivering tenancy and money management training. Review 16–17 year old protocol and improve joint assessments with BFFC. Strengthen transitions between services for 18-year-olds. Investigate the connection between sexuality, gender and neurodivergence and homelessness, especially in young people, and evaluate how we best enable access to services for neurodivergent individuals. Use the LIFT dashboard to identify young people at risk of homelessness – such as those qualifying for non-dependent deductions or becoming ineligible for Child Benefit.
- Continue to support refugee and asylum households, using Home Office decision lists to plan responses, ensuring that both staff and services are culturally sensitive, and access is inclusive.
- Strengthen multi-agency risk management and safeguarding links.
- Promote a One Directorate approach, sharing training and resources across teams.

Section 2: Review of Reading's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2024

Overview

Reading's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 – 2024 focused on five priorities: early intervention and prevention, recovery and community integration, rapid intervention, united support and enforcement, and provision of information and alternative ways to give. This review summarises progress and key learning to inform future strategic direction.

Early intervention and preventions: Summary of key achievements

- Improved data collection and a dedicated Data and Evaluation Lead have helped improve what we know about people verified sleeping rough and informed service development.
- The Accommodation for Ex-Offenders project supported over 200 referrals and created 50+ tenancies in the private rented sector.
- Strong joint working with NHS Health Outreach Liaison Team (HOLT) prevented hospital discharges to rough sleeping, while Duty to Refer was embedded in non-statutory services.
- Proportional reduction in new and repeat rough sleepers, despite overall increase in numbers.

Recovery and community integration: Summary of key achievements

- Secured significant capital and revenue grant funding from the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Centre for Homelessness Impact (CHI) to deliver new accommodation and support initiatives.
- Developed the Caversham Road Pods and Nova Project and expanded Housing First to deliver 87 additional bed spaces for people with complex needs.
- Outreach and tenancy sustainment teams expanded to include out-of-hours support and complex case workers.

Rapid intervention: Summary of key achievements

- Willow House continued to offer 24/7 emergency bed spaces, supported by the introduction of a YMCA crash pad for young people and the scoping of NAPpad provision to further expand off-the-streets options.
- A new pilot project and navigator role supported individuals with Limited Access to Public Funds and Non-UK Nationals who were rough sleeping with acquiring immigration status outcomes and subsequent housing options.
- Monthly progression meetings helped create vacancies in supported housing and strengthened move-on pathways into long-term accommodation.
- Learning Framework commissioning and Power BI dashboards improved service agility and performance monitoring.

United support and enforcement: Summary of key achievements

- Rough Sleeping Initiatives team supported enforcement in hotspot areas and supported the work of the Safer Public Realm team to ensure action was paired with outreach support and housing offers.
- Weekly encampment updates and Power BI alerts improved transparency and enabled faster responses.
- Multi-agency panel involvement helped address begging and anti-social behaviour linked to rough sleeping.
- Public messaging and reporting channels were strengthened and made clearer to reduce stigma and promote appropriate, compassionate reporting and responses.

Information and alternative giving: Summary of key achievements

- The Homelessness Partnership (HoP) strengthened cross-sector coordination and shared learning.
- A dedicated Media and Communications Manager for housing improved visibility of homelessness services, as did Members briefings in raising awareness among Councillors.
- StreetLink campaign actively promoted as single point of referral into the rough sleeping outreach service.
- Tap for Reading pilot launched in January 2025, offering alternative donation options and raising public awareness around rough sleeping and begging.

Full review of objectives, achievements, and actions to take forward to 2025 – 30

Priority 1: Early intervention and prevention

Where possible, intervene early to prevent rough sleeping in the first place and prevent people from returning to the streets once housed.

Our objective was to...

...prevent those who are vulnerable to sleeping rough from moving towards entrenched and harmful behaviours and lifestyles by intervening as early as possible.

Aims / commitments:

- Reduce the number of people sleeping rough on the streets of Reading to 15 or fewer, by our rough sleeping count in the autumn of 2022.

Achievements and how:

- Reading's annual snapshot rough sleeping figure has increased year-on-year since 2020.
- There has been a proportional decrease in those new to the streets and repeatedly sleeping rough, but an increase in those sleeping rough long-term. An increase in the number of people sleeping rough who were unknown has been reversed by better data collation methods.
- Improved data collation to ensure unknown individuals sleeping rough are identified, engaged with, and captured – understanding people sleeping rough better: numbers, status, off-the-streets needs, and options.

Suggested actions to take forward to 2025 – 30:

- Pursue a reduction of rough sleeping numbers in Reading, in accordance with the national ambition to prevent rough sleeping wherever possible and, where it cannot be prevented, making it a rare, brief, and non-recurrent experience.

<p>Aims / commitments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in partnership to prevent those discharged from hospital, prison or other institutional settings ending up on the streets of Reading. • Develop a response that works with our neighbouring boroughs and local authorities further afield so that joint working benefits individuals, including identifying and maximising cross-boundary funding bids and opportunities.
<p>Achievements and how:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of a fixed-term Berkshire-wide strategic lead to improve coordination of the homelessness and rough sleeping response across the region. • Well-established Accommodation for Ex-Offenders (AfEO) project since 2022, supporting access to private rented sector housing for people leaving custody. Over 50 tenancies created, 200+ referrals received, and individuals supported to sustain or transition into appropriate accommodation. • Strong partnership with HMPS Homelessness Prevention Taskforce has improved Duty to Refer rates prior to release, supported by regular meetings, shared release information, and Taskforce attendance at Access Panel. • Pilot with HMP Bullingdon to identify individuals at risk of homelessness well ahead of release, enabling timely referrals to the correct local authority. • Introduction of CAS3 accommodation offer in Reading has strengthened referral and prevention pathways for prison leavers. • Close joint working between the Rough Sleeping Initiatives team, rough sleeping outreach service and NHS-commissioned Health Outreach Liaison Team (HOLT) to deliver co-ordinated support to prevent hospital discharges to rough sleeping.
<p>Suggested actions to take forward to 2025 – 30:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with HMPS to expand early identification pilots to more prisons, enabling earlier homelessness prevention planning. • Improve Duty to Refer compliance across CAS3, Probation, and Prisons to ensure timely referrals and coordinated support. • Engage with individuals placed in CAS3 accommodation at the earliest opportunity to maximise positive housing outcomes and prevent rough sleeping. • Use data to better identify early risk of homelessness, monitor the success of the AfEO project, and track tenancy sustainment outcomes. • Inform service commissioning and delivery through the voices of people with lived experience leaving prison and hospital, ensuring services are responsive and person-centred.

Aims / Commitments:

Ensure that access to, and sustainment of, income benefits are not barriers to obtaining accommodation for people who are rough sleeping or vulnerable to rough sleeping, through joint working with statutory partners such as the Department for Work and Pensions and our voluntary sector advice providers

Achievements and how:

- Outreach focused on setting up benefits and bank accounts in advance of entering accommodation.

Actions to take forward to 2025 – 30:

- Arrears and overcharges remain a significant barrier for our most complex people and affects affordability for move on too.
- Focus support services upon acquiring identification to set up bank accounts and income benefits; check at Access Panel and Progression Meeting if Universal Credit is in place, and a bank account sustained to prevent this being someone's future barrier to moving on.
- Utilise data and Power BI dashboards to identify individuals with current or former rent arrears that may hinder their transition into private rented or social housing, even after gaining the skills to live independently.

Aims / commitments:

- Provide tools and knowledge to the public, professionals, and partners to enable them to identify specific triggers, risk factors and causes of rough sleeping at different points in a person's journey to ensure that the right services are targeting individuals at the right time.
- Improve strategic communications by raising awareness, coordinating services, and building trust with partners and vulnerable individuals.
- Co-produce services by ensuring that they are shaped with, not just for, people with lived experience – making support more relevant, accessible, and effective.
- Strengthen partnerships with the voluntary and community sector to extend its reach, harness trusted frontline support, and deliver more co-ordinated, person-centred interventions that prevent and reduce rough sleeping.
- Embed No First Night Out principles internally, throughout commissioned services and into places where the wider community may have contact with people who are sleeping or may sleep rough.
- Continue the development of the Hub offer at Willow House to include more statutory services and the 'one-stop shop' concept. This will include developing a robust response for people with No Recourse to Public Funds.

Achievements and how:

- Introduction of Street Support Network from 2021–2024, and re-establishment of Reading’s Homelessness Forum, in the guise of the Homelessness Partnership (HoP), to support networking and shared learning.
- VCFS partners played a vital role during the ‘Everyone In’ initiative, strengthening relationships and reinforcing their importance in supporting those sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough.
- Strong partnerships at operational level contributed to upskilling professionals and developing a holistic view of situations that lead to rough sleeping.
- Refocus and renaming of the Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) Coordinator role, commissioned to Launchpad, to lead targeted training and coordinate co-production, embedding lived experience into service design.
- Duty to Refer is now embedded in commissioned supported housing services, ensuring clients at risk of eviction are proactively identified and referred by non-statutory providers to the homelessness prevention team.
- Use of the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) from Policy in Practice to run targeted campaigns – drawing on housing benefit and income data – has effectively identified households at risk and enabled early, proactive officer contact.
- Expansion of Launchpad Reading drop-in service to offer housing advice across more days and to key services such as Approved Premises.
- Outreach services across homelessness, substance misuse, and health utilise Willow House as a hub in delivering joined-up support for residents and those sleeping rough.
- VCFS responses have adapted to fill gaps and diversify early intervention, including community fridges, food pantries, foodbank expansion, refugee support, and homework clubs for families.
- Ad-hoc training has been delivered to VCFS partners and volunteers throughout the strategy period to support early signposting, covering Safeguarding Level 1, boundaries, homelessness services, and Duty to Refer.
- Employment of a Data and Evaluation Lead in the Rough Sleeping Initiatives team to improve how data is collated, monitored, and used to inform service development.
- An improved effort from the Council to raise public awareness of rough sleeping, how residents can help, and what support is available.
- Supporting World Homeless Day with VCFS partners to promote messaging around rough sleeping, begging, and available services.
- Better communications about funding use, SWEP, year-round and winter-specific interventions via a dedicated Media and Communications Manager – using social media, press releases, and resident newsletters.
- Launch of Tap for Reading – more info under Priority 5.

Suggested actions to take forward to 2025 – 30:

- Co-develop an early identification toolkit to help the homelessness prevention team and partners identify risk indicators, enabling timely referrals and access to support such as No First Night Out accommodation.
- Explore No First and No Second Night Out models for Reading, drawing on best practice to strengthen early interventions.
- Use lived experience to identify risk factors for rough sleeping and inform the design of targeted, person-centred intervention services.
- Enhance Reading's Homelessness Partnership (HoP) to evolve beyond a networking forum into a strategic delivery body shaped by lived experience and co-production.
- Develop structured opportunities for people with lived experience to shape early intervention and prevention responses through a dedicated forum and co-production framework.
- Accelerate development of peer mentorship and lived experience roles, embedding them into service design, delivery, and governance.
- Continue improving data collation and usage, particularly around hidden homelessness, and early triggers, to inform proactive service development.
- Strengthen the rolling training programme for VCFS partners, building on previous ad-hoc sessions and aligning with co-production to embed shared learning and frontline capacity.
- Use Target Priority Group monitoring to evaluate what works, report findings to the Safeguarding Adults Board, and ensure rough sleeping is represented at each quarterly meeting.
- Expand statutory service presence at Willow House, progressing toward a robust 'one-stop shop' model, including pathways for individuals with No Recourse to Public Funds.
- Formalise hospital discharge protocols to ensure early identification, notification, and referral to the local housing authority for patients sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough.
- Explore opportunities with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to improve access to dental, ophthalmic, GP, and pharmacy services for socially excluded individuals.
- Review and improve information about rough sleeping on the Council's website to ensure clarity and accessibility.
- Address public misconceptions that rough sleeping may lead to quicker access to social housing, promoting accurate messaging around pathways and support.
- Review the Tap for Reading pilot and its impact on public understanding of rough sleeping and perceptions of begging.
- Develop a strategic communications plan to unify messaging across partners, improve service visibility, and build trust with vulnerable individuals and the wider community.

Aim / commitments:

Improve access to social care, mental and physical health and drug/alcohol services including:

- In-reach support and targeted surgeries for those sleeping rough and those at risk of rough sleeping at the Hub and across other Homelessness Support Services
- Where possible, having flexible and innovative responses to how those sleeping rough obtain and access primary healthcare services, including dental health services.
- Break down barriers for people who feel that their substance dependency prevents them from receiving support with their mental health – utilising peer support groups for those experiencing substance dependency.
- Early identification, notification, and referral to the local housing authority, prior to hospital discharge, for those sleeping rough and those at risk of homelessness

Achievements and how:

- Funding from MHCLG grants has enabled the creation of a specialist social worker role to support individuals sleeping rough or living in commissioned supported accommodation.
- Continued partnership working with the OHID-funded/Public Health commissioned Multiple Disadvantage Outreach Team (MDOT) has provided substance misuse and health support to those sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough.
- Ongoing collaboration with the Health Outreach Liaison Team (HOLT) to deliver targeted support to the rough sleeping cohort.
- Early development of a Lived Experience Forum and co-production initiatives, including exploration of peer mentorship opportunities to strengthen frontline practice and service design.

Suggested actions to take forward to 2025 – 30:

- Recruitment and retention of a specialist Social Worker to support individuals sleeping rough.
- Explore opportunities with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to improve access to dental, ophthalmic, GP, and pharmacy services for socially excluded individuals and those sleeping rough to strengthen low-barrier clinical pathways.
- Formalise hospital discharge protocols to ensure early identification, notification, and referral to the local housing authority for patients who are rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping – this remains an underdeveloped area requiring stronger cross-sector coordination.
- Improved and sustained transitions from specialist services into mainstream provision, helping to free up capacity for future complex needs.
- Accelerate development of peer mentorship and lived experience involvement, moving beyond early-stage co-production to embedded, structured roles that influence service design and delivery.
- Use Target Priority Group monitoring to evaluate what works and identify areas for improvement, ensuring findings are reported to the Safeguarding Adults Board and that rough sleeping is represented at each quarterly meeting.

Priority 2: Recovery and community integration

Ensuring that recovery underpins tenancy sustainment as part of a holistic approach to homelessness prevention.

Our objective was to...

...ensure that recovery underpins tenancy sustainment as part of a holistic approach to homelessness prevention.

Aims / commitments:

- Provide a holistic approach to recovery that does not solely focus upon clinical, structured, and prescriptive interventions, but upon wellbeing, and purposeful and meaningful occupation of time for those affected by drug/alcohol dependency; mental ill-health; criminal behaviours and/or homelessness.
- Work with partners across sectors to introduce peer-to-peer and mutually beneficial relationships including befriending and mentoring to reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation.
- Focus efforts on recovery at the earliest stage possible to sustain existing life and employment skills and avoid the development of entrenched behaviours.
- Work with partners to create offers of support and accommodation that can engage individuals with a history of not engaging with services and offers.
- Promote social integration as a key factor in sustaining tenancies and preventing repeat homelessness.

Achievements and how:

- Successfully secured a range of national and regional funding streams – including the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP), Accommodation for Ex-Offenders (AfEO), Rough Sleeping Initiatives (RSI)/Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant (RSPARG), Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP), Transformation Fund, and Centre for Homelessness Impact (CHI) – to expand and diversify Reading’s rough sleeping response. This enabled the development of key projects such as the Caversham Road Pods (established in 2021), the Nova Project (launched in 2022), and the expansion of Housing First from five people in 2018 to 32 in 2022, and 37 in 2024, including tailored support for couples. Outreach and tenancy sustainment teams grew to include rough sleeping navigators, an out-of-hours offer, and complex case workers. These initiatives, delivered in partnership with the VCFS, offer low-barrier accommodation and wraparound support for individuals who have historically not engaged with traditional services.
- Supported and evidenced the commission and launch of the Multiple Disadvantage Outreach Team (MDOT) in 2022, by drug and alcohol commissioners using OHID funding, to deliver flexible, cross-sector support for individuals sleeping rough or at risk – focusing on substance misuse, health needs, and engagement with those facing multiple and complex disadvantages.
- With support from the Council, partners have independently funded and introduced offers to improve wellbeing, learning, and employment for people sleeping rough, vulnerably housed, or in supported accommodation: St Mungo’s Recovery

College, now operating remotely with a focus on employment pathways, and Launchpad Reading's 135 Cardiff Road Work and Life Skills Centre, providing permanent premises for holistic wellbeing, education, and meaningful occupation.

- All commissioned services have delivered added social value by using personal budgets and recovery-focused programmes to promote meaningful and enjoyable activities – such as an 8-week life skills, learning and development course (Salvation Army), football tournaments, gardening, tending allotments (Launchpad), cooking skills, and wellbeing walks—supporting both personal development and improved physical health.
- Although the planned multi-agency 'Pop-Up Hub' was not trialled due to changes in funding, a flexible hub-based model has evolved across Reading. Outreach services now operate from Willow House, with MDOT and HOLT holding regular surgeries, and health/substance misuse outreach services offer appointment and drop-ins at Nova, Pods, Alana House, and Launchpad Reading drop-ins. Additional initiatives include collaborative work with FAITH Christian Group, who offer cool spaces during hot weather and a day hub during Cold SWEP periods.

Suggested actions to take forward to 2025 – 30:

- Strengthen peer-led and mentoring pathways, including formal befriending schemes, to reduce loneliness and social isolation among people with lived experience of homelessness, substance misuse, and mental ill-health.
- Embed early-stage recovery interventions that proactively sustain life and employment skills before entrenched behaviours develop – moving beyond crisis response to preventative engagement.
- Continue with personalised, non-clinical recovery pathways that prioritise wellbeing and meaningful occupation of time, especially for those affected by multiple disadvantage, criminal behaviours, or long-term substance dependency.
- Enhance engagement strategies for individuals who historically avoid services, including co-designed accommodation and support offers that reflect lived experience and trauma-informed practice.
- Promote and measure social integration outcomes as part of tenancy sustainment efforts, ensuring that community connection and purposeful activity are central to preventing repeat homelessness.

Priority 3: Rapid intervention

When people do end up sleeping rough, provide rapid intervention and reconnection support to ensure that they are offered an appropriate and sustainable housing solution.

Our objective was to...

...intervene rapidly when prevention has been ineffective and homelessness is unavoidable.

Aims / commitments:

- Identify and verify individuals quickly and assess their needs accurately and efficiently.
- Offer a personalised and sustainable route away from the streets for every person sleeping rough, where that offer must be based on their individual circumstances and must be regardless of their local connection or immigration status.
- Work with partners to explore, establish, and enable support and accommodation options for people sleeping rough who have No Recourse to Public Funds
- Ensure clear off-the-streets and long-term accommodation planning for each individual.
- Commission effective supported accommodation services.

Achievements and how:

- Continued operation of Willow House as Reading's primary 24/7 sit-up hub, offering three bed spaces for immediate off-the-streets provision for people sleeping rough.
- Introduction of a crash pad at the YMCA for those aged 18 – 24 who are rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping, to provide an immediate off the streets offer, with a pathway into supported housing or the private rented sector – aiming to prevent entrenched behaviours and lifestyles.
- Expansion of Housing First provision for single people and couples, supported by Rough Sleeping Initiative and SHAP funding, offering long-term, wraparound support tailored to complex needs.
- Development of a couples move-on pathway to provide Housing First accommodation and support for those with complex needs which has supported a reduction in female rough sleeping numbers.
- Flexible use of Rough Sleeping Initiative funding to bridge the gap between street homelessness and access to supported housing via short-term paid nightly accommodation.
- Maximised use of the Council's quota queue to enable direct moves from the streets into social housing, including secure tenancies for Housing First and couples pathway clients.
- Funding and coordination support to FAITH Christian Group's Bed for the Night Winter Shelter which operates January – March every year which provides a safe space and platform for people to access longer-term housing options.
- Funding and coordination of Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) to ensure that lives are protected during extremes of cold and hot weather.
- Monthly supported housing progression meetings to coordinate and support transitions into long-term accommodation.

- Navigator role introduced to support individuals with No Recourse to Public Funds to access specialist support and achieve immigration outcomes to enable access to income and housing benefits, opening up accommodation options away from rough sleeping.
- Successful bid to the Centre for Homelessness Impact for a 12-month Non-UK Nationals Test and Learn Project (starting March 2025), offering time-limited accommodation, support, and legal/immigration advice.
- Scoping of NAPpad provision to expand emergency off-the-streets accommodation options with implementation expected 2025/26.
- Adoption of a Learning Framework approach to commissioning, enabling agile service delivery and accountability through feedback from commissioned services.
- Quarterly monitoring meetings with commissioned services to review KPIs, case studies, and barriers, with specifications reviewed at each contract extension.
- Introduction of Power BI dashboards for transparent KPI data submission and performance analysis.
- Employment of a dedicated Data and Performance Lead to enhance monitoring and interpretation of supported accommodation performance.
- Promotion of Streetlink as the primary reporting tool for rough sleeping, ensuring fast outreach response and consistent messaging to the public.
- Well-funded core homelessness support services, enhanced by MHCLG grants, increasing staffing capacity across Housing First and outreach teams, including specialisms for women, people with limited access to public funds, and those without a local connection.

Suggested actions to take forward to 2025 – 30:

- Progress the development and implementation of NAPpads to diversify emergency accommodation options.
- Act on the MHCLG Deep Dive recommendation to expand off-the-streets provision for people new to rough sleeping, regardless of immigration status or local connection – recognising that planning sustainable accommodation pathways is more effective from a place of safety.
- Continue to deliver and explore opportunities to expand Housing First provision for both single people and couples, ensuring long-term, wraparound support tailored to complex needs.
- Use the voice of lived experience to shape how services are commissioned, delivered, and improved – embedding insight into decision-making and frontline practice.
- Develop a formal co-production approach and framework to ensure meaningful involvement of people with lived experience in service design and review.
- Increase in-person visits to commissioned services to strengthen relationships, improve oversight, and support collaborative problem-solving.
- Explore practical solutions to improve dignity and engagement for those sleeping rough, including access to storage for belongings and mobile phone charging points while awaiting accommodation.

Priority 4: United support and enforcement action in Reading

Protecting communities by tackling street activities associated with rough sleeping and intervening to stop dangerous behaviours.

Our objective was to...

...approach rough sleeping in a way that supports individuals, but that also protects Reading's resident and business community from the effects of any associated anti-social behaviours.

Aims / commitments:

- Identify individual offending behaviour and associated risk, to enable multi-agency intervention to protect the individual, public and business community.
- Provide a jointly agreed coordinated and measured response to offending behaviour.
- Ensure that all intervention includes elements of supporting individuals to access services and/or an assessment of the current support they are receiving.

Achievements and how:

- Focus on supporting hotspot areas in the town centre and areas of business to ensure the Rough Sleeping Initiatives team supports enforcement action when it is actioned by the Safer Public Realm Team.
- Joint working with the Safer Public Realm Team has led to more robust internal procedures for enforcement and consistent updates on encampments.
- Weekly encampment updates are shared with Lead Councillors and internal stakeholders to ensure transparency and coordinated action.
- The Rough Sleeping Initiatives team is actively involved in meetings the Safer Public Realm team holds with private landowners to ensure enforcement actions are paired with appropriate housing and support offers, maintaining a balanced approach.
- A fixed-term Street Warden, jointly commissioned by the Business Improvement District, was deployed to disrupt begging activity in the town centre.
- The Rough Sleeping Initiatives team regularly attends the Sex Workers Action Group and Borough Problem Solving Group to expedite housing options for individuals whose homelessness is linked to anti-social behaviour, supporting recovery-focused interventions.
- Data monitoring has improved using Power BI dashboards and trigger alerts, enabling the RSI team to respond quickly when encampments grow based on outreach data.
- Messaging consistently distinguishes between rough sleeping and anti-social behaviour, making clear that rough sleeping itself is not inherently anti-social.

- Promotion of how to report anti-social behaviour associated with rough sleeping is included in all communications from the Rough Sleeping Initiatives team to Councillors, MPs, and members of the public.
- Reporting channels – such as Streetlink for rough sleeping and local authority systems for anti-social behaviour – are clearly signposted to ensure appropriate and timely responses.
- Public-facing materials use consistent language to reduce stigma, build understanding, and encourage compassionate engagement with individuals experiencing homelessness.

Suggested actions to take forward to 2025 – 30:

- Link operational activity to relevant priorities within Reading's Community Safety Partnership, ensuring joint working across services. These priorities include reducing crime in high-impact neighbourhoods; improving responses to anti-social behaviour and hate crime; tackling community-based drug activity; and supporting multi-agency approaches to individuals whose offending or vulnerability is linked to rough sleeping. This alignment will strengthen coordinated interventions and ensure enforcement and support are delivered in tandem.
- Enhance cross-sector training and protocols to ensure that all partners – including private landowners, BID teams, and enforcement officers - understand the balance between public protection and individual support.
- Continue the role of the Rough Sleeping Initiatives team in multi-agency panels, ensuring that individuals with complex needs linked to offending behaviour are proactively supported via outreach and supported housing.
- Ensure integration between enforcement and support planning, so that housing and recovery options are not only offered but actively coordinated alongside enforcement actions.
- Ensure that every enforcement-related intervention includes a structured assessment of current support and a clear pathway to accessing services – this needs to be embedded more consistently across all cases.
- Expand the scope of data monitoring to include behavioural risk indicators and service engagement levels, enabling more targeted interventions and better tracking of outcomes.
- Identify and pursue additional funding opportunities to strengthen coordinated legal responses in cases where support-based interventions for individuals sleeping rough or in encampments have proven insufficient, and where targeted disruption is necessary to encourage engagement with services and reduce anti-social behaviour.

Priority 5: Provision of information and alternative ways to give

Providing information and guidance to the community, residents, and visitors regarding alternative ways to support those who are sleeping rough.

Our objective was to...

...provide steer to our local communities in how they respond to people who are sleeping rough by providing sufficient and accessible information, support, and guidance around how we collectively and individually support vulnerable people.

Aims / commitments:

- Keep the public, our community groups, professionals, and businesses up to date and well-informed about the vast amount of support that already exists in Reading. We need to have a strong, consistently messaged, and shared strategy of communication.
- Educate the public and groups outside of the homelessness sector regarding how giving to people that are begging can fuel and exacerbate entrenched lifestyles, which may or may not include rough sleeping, by funding drug and alcohol dependency.
- Channel our cross-sector energies and resources in the same direction to develop and implement a co-produced alternative means for people to direct their good will and donations that does not perpetuate rough sleeping, anti-social or begging behaviours in Reading

Achievements and how:

- Tap for Reading alternative giving scheme successfully launched in January 2025, offering the public a safe and impactful way to donate to local charities supporting people who are rough sleeping or at risk. The scheme is part of a 12-month pilot led by Community Safety partners and supported by the Rough Sleeping Initiatives Team, aimed at educating the public about rough sleeping, begging, and existing support services in Reading. It also helps divert funds away from potentially harmful uses and toward recovery-focused interventions.
- Street Support Reading played a key role in establishing the Homelessness Partnership (HoP) and was later superseded by Tap for Reading and the use of existing platforms such as Homeless Link and the RBC Service Guide – streamlining resources and improving cross-sector communications.
- Reading's HoP continues to provide a cross-sector platform for sharing information and coordinating responses across services and organisations. Continued efforts are being made to create a truly multi-agency, cross-sector homelessness, and social inclusion forum, building on the foundations of the HoP and strengthening collaborative working across Reading.
- A dedicated Media and Communications Manager within Housing Needs has significantly enhanced the promotion of homelessness and rough sleeping efforts, increased social media presence and press engagement. This resource has been instrumental in launching and sustaining Tap for Reading.
- Work is ongoing to improve the Council's rough sleeping section of the website to centralise information and improve access to support.
- The national StreetLink campaign is actively promoted across Reading via Councillors, outreach teams, the Council website, and the Tap for Reading initiative – ensuring the public, businesses, and partners know how to report rough sleeping.
- A stronger communications campaign has been developed around begging, with clear messaging that not all individuals who beg are homeless, and that alternative giving supports long-term solutions.
- Members briefings have been used to promote rough sleeping services and Tap for Reading and raise awareness among constituents about homelessness, begging, and how to report concerns.

Suggested actions to take forward to 2025 – 30:

- Contribute to the 12-month pilot review and determine success and future of the Tap for Reading campaign.
- Strengthen the strategic coordination of cross-sector communications, ensuring all partners consistently promote the same messages about support services, alternative giving, and the realities of rough sleeping and begging.
- Expand public education efforts beyond the homelessness sector to include schools, faith groups, and community organisations – clarifying the risks of giving directly to people who beg and promoting informed compassion.
- Ensure the Council’s rough sleeping website section is fully developed into a comprehensive, user-friendly platform that centralises information, signposts services, and supports public understanding.
- Build on Homelessness Partnership foundations to include broader representation and shared governance that links to developing co-production forums and frameworks.
- Develop and implement a communications and training plan to equip internal teams and external frontline partners – such as parks and street cleansing staff – with clear, accessible information they can share with individuals sleeping rough, ensuring consistent messaging, and signposting to support services.

Conclusion

Reading’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies from 2020–25 and 2019–24 have delivered considerable progress across early intervention, targeted support, and access to accommodation. Through strengthened partnerships, innovative pilots, digital transformation, and person-centred approaches, the Council has enhanced service delivery and outcomes for vulnerable residents. The strategies have laid a solid foundation for future work, with clear learning and actionable insights to inform the next phase. Continued focus on prevention, recovery, co-production, and cross-sector collaboration will be essential to achieving Reading’s ambition of making homelessness and rough sleeping rare, brief, and non-recurrent in Reading.

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Reading
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Understanding Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in Reading: Strategic needs analysis

June 2025

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Introduction

This document represents the initial phase in developing a combined Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for Reading. It brings together a wide range of data and analysis to inform a strategic response that is evidence-based, collaborative, and tailored to local needs.

Drawing on Census 2021 data, local service intelligence, and national policy developments, the review outlines the demographic, economic, and housing context in which homelessness and rough sleeping occur. It highlights key pressures – including population growth, affordability challenges, health inequalities, and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis – that shape demand for services and influence housing stability.

The findings will support the development of targeted interventions and help ensure that future services are inclusive, responsive, and aligned with the needs of Reading's residents. Crucially, this review will inform the strategy's priorities and underpin the development of a detailed action plan to guide delivery over the next five years.

By establishing a shared understanding of the current landscape, this document provides a foundation for strategic planning and service development across the borough in tackling homelessness and rough sleeping.

Funding of homelessness and rough sleeping services

Government funding for homelessness services is channelled through several departments, including the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, Local Government, and the Department for Work and Pensions. These departments allocate resources via specific grants and payments such as the Homelessness Prevention Grant, Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant, Discretionary Housing Payments, Housing Benefit, and Temporary Accommodation subsidies. All funding ultimately reaches local authorities, who are responsible for delivering homelessness support.

In 2025–26, nearly £1 billion has been allocated to councils to tackle homelessness. Key funding includes over £633 million for the Homelessness Prevention Grant, £185.6 million for the Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant, and £53.7 million for drug and alcohol treatment. Additional support includes £37 million for RSAP, £10 million for Changing Futures, £7.6 million for sector support initiatives, and £5 million for emergency accommodation reduction pilots.

Multiple government departments contribute to homelessness services beyond core housing funding. These include health funding for drug and housing support, justice initiatives like the Community Accommodation Service and housing specialists, and Cabinet Office pilot programmes. Legal aid has been expanded for housing and immigration cases, while the Department for Work and Pensions supports through Discretionary Housing Payments and the Household Support Grant. The Department for Education funds programmes for care leavers, including Staying Put, Staying Close, and targeted support for those at highest risk of homelessness.

The table below outlines grants and amounts awarded to Reading Borough Council, from central Government, between 2020/21 and 2025/26. The Council contributes £932k per annum of General Funds and £337k per annum of Public Health grant towards specialist support, accommodation, and tenancy sustainment for those rough sleeping or at risk of homelessness.

Homelessness and/or rough sleeping grant	Reason for grant award	Amount awarded to Reading Borough Council
Homelessness Prevention Grant	Funding provided to help councils meet duties under the Housing Act 1996 and deliver local homelessness strategies. These total amounts included: £321,771 winter top-up in 2021/22 and £247,516 winter top-up and £21,608 for Domestic Abuse Act new burdens in 2022/23.	£1,856,369 (2021/22) £1,803,722 (2022/23) £2,042,191 (2023/24) £2,054,488 (2024/25) £3,128,534 (2025/26)
Rough Sleeping Initiative 2021/22	£203 million was allocated across 281 areas in England, combining the Rough Sleeping Initiative and Rapid Rehousing Pathway. In Reading, funding supported expanded outreach, additional Housing First, and staffing to improve support and accommodation for people sleeping rough.	£1,036,930
Rough Sleeping Initiatives 2022-25	Up to £500 million was allocated across 303 areas in England to support people sleeping rough or at risk of it. In Reading, it funded expanded outreach, additional Housing First, and staffing to strengthen support and accommodation.	£3,349,023
Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant 2025-26	£185.6 million was awarded to councils in England as part of a wider £1 billion package for homelessness services. RSPARG combined funding for rough sleeping services, Housing First, and support for ex-offenders, aiming to simplify grant access and management.	£1,182,240
Winter Pressures / Additional Pressures Funding	£60 million was distributed to 295 councils in three stages to support emergency accommodation during cold weather. It complemented the Rough Sleeping Initiative 2022–25 and aimed to reduce health risks for people sleeping rough.	£457,998
Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme	Launched in 2020 with £435 million, the programme supports up to 6,000 people into longer-term housing with wraparound support. In Reading, it funds: 40 modular units at Caversham Road, 10 female-only bedspaces at The Nova Project. Both offer 24/7 staffing for people with multiple needs and rough sleeping histories.	£2,300,000 (2021-24) £760,919 (2024/25) £881,919 (2025/26)
Single Homeless Accommodation Programme	£255.7 million was awarded over five cycles to increase long-term housing for people sleeping rough or at risk, across 303 areas. In Reading, it funded five additional Housing First units.	£647,788
Accommodation for Ex-Offenders	AFEO provided capital and revenue funding to help prison leavers at risk of homelessness access private rented housing. It aimed to increase long-term accommodation and reduce reoffending through tenancy support and landlord incentives. In Reading, over 200 referrals were made and 50+ tenancies secured.	£254,063 (2021-23) £336,200 (2023-25)

Current local and national policy context

UK legislation impacting homelessness and rough sleeping

This is an overview of all legislation that governs homelessness services or that is relevant, within other sectors and services, to successful service delivery.

Legislation	Sector	Key Provisions	Implications for homelessness and rough sleeping
Mental Health Act 1983 (as amended)	Health / Adult Social Care	Enables assessment and treatment for mental illness	Supports joint working; may trigger housing duties for those discharged from hospital
Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000	Children's Social Care	Requires pathway planning and support for care leavers up to age 25	Recognises care leavers as a high-risk group; mandates housing and support provision
Welfare Reform Act 2012	Welfare Support	Introduced Universal Credit, benefit caps, and under-occupancy rules	Contributed to rent arrears and evictions; increased financial pressure on low-income households
Care Act 2014	Adult Social Care	Duty to assess and meet care needs; safeguarding responsibilities	Supports wraparound care for people sleeping rough; enables housing-related support for people with care needs
Homelessness Reduction Act 2017	Housing / Local Government	Introduces prevention and relief duties; duty to refer from public bodies	Promotes early intervention; increases referrals from health, justice, and social care sectors
Domestic Abuse Act 2021	Criminal Justice / Housing	Extends priority need for housing to all survivors; duty to provide safe accommodation	Helps prevent homelessness among survivors; ensures access to safe, supported housing
Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act	Housing / Regulation	Introduces minimum standards and licensing for supported housing	Aims to improve quality and safety; may reduce provision if smaller providers exit the market
Renters' Rights Bill (proposed)	Housing / Tenancy Law	Abolishes Section 21 evictions; introduces tenancy reforms	May reduce rental supply and increase competition for affordable homes

The sections below outline key recent legislation that has, or will have, a significant impact on how homelessness and support services are delivered across the lifetime of Reading's new homelessness and rough sleeping strategy.

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA)

The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) has significantly reshaped the way local housing authorities respond to homelessness. By placing a legal duty on councils to intervene earlier, the HRA has expanded the scope of support to include all eligible households, not just those in priority need. The Act also introduced the Duty to Refer, requiring specified public authorities to refer individuals who may be homeless or at risk to local homelessness prevention teams – promoting earlier intervention and cross-sector collaboration. This has led to a marked increase in the number of homelessness applications, particularly under prevention and relief duties. As a result, local authorities have experienced a substantial rise in workload, with more assessments, personalised housing plans, and case management responsibilities. While this has improved the quality and detail of homelessness data, it has also placed additional pressure on already stretched homelessness services.

Renters' Rights Bill

The Renters' Rights Bill introduces reform to the private rented sector that support homelessness prevention, including the abolition of Section 21 'no fault' evictions, enhanced protections against retaliatory evictions, and the creation of a Private Rented Sector Ombudsman. These measures aim to reduce evictions into homelessness and improve housing stability for vulnerable households. However, the Bill is anticipated to have unintended consequences. Increased regulation and uncertainty have prompted some landlords to exit the market, reducing the supply of affordable rental properties. This contraction in stock, combined with rising demand, may lead to higher rents, greater competition, and reduced access to housing for low-income households. Additionally, enforcement challenges – such as limited local authority capacity and tenant reluctance to report issues – could undermine the Bill's effectiveness. These pressures risk exacerbating housing insecurity and increasing demand for homelessness services. Reading's strategy must therefore balance the Bill's protective intent with proactive measures to mitigate market disruption and support those most at risk.

Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act

The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act introduces a national framework to improve the quality, safety, and accountability of supported housing, including provision for people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. By establishing minimum standards, a licensing regime, and clearer definitions of supported housing, the Act aims to protect vulnerable residents and ensure public funding delivers effective, value-for-money support. However, sector leaders have raised concerns about several unintended consequences. These include the risk that smaller, community-based or specialist providers may be unable to absorb the administrative and compliance costs, leading to service closures or market withdrawal. A "blanket" regulatory approach may also fail to distinguish between exploitative providers and high-quality services, resulting in disproportionate burdens on compliant organisations. Additionally, devolving licensing decisions to local authorities could lead to inconsistent implementation and local opposition to essential services, particularly in areas with limited understanding of supported housing needs. If not carefully managed, these outcomes could reduce the availability of supported accommodation, increase pressure on homelessness services, and undermine the very protections the Act seeks to strengthen. The strategy must therefore advocate for proportionate,

well-funded implementation that reflects the diversity and complexity of supported housing provision.

Relevant Council and wider sector strategies and policies

Reading's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-30 sits alongside a number of other, strategies and policies. How these all interconnect is crucial where the strategy will not be successful without effective cross-Council, cross-sector and partnership working to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in Reading.

Why these links matter

The integration of homelessness and rough sleeping strategies with wider Council strategies reflects a recognition that early intervention, breaking the cycle of homelessness and enabling housing security is not an isolated issue. It is deeply connected to health, economic inequality, community safety, and social inclusion. Embedding housing-related objectives across multiple strategic areas would deliver more effective, coordinated, and sustainable responses to homelessness.

Relevant strategy or policy	Link to Reading’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 – 30
Council Plan 2025–2028	Sets the overarching vision and priorities for Reading, including tackling inequality, safeguarding, and supporting the health and wellbeing of Reading’s adults and children, and delivering affordable housing – all of which underpin the homelessness strategy.
Reading’s Housing Strategy 2020–2025	Focuses on increasing affordable housing supply, improving housing conditions, and supporting vulnerable residents. Promotes prevention and partnership working, with both the homelessness and housing strategy aiming to ensure that everyone in Reading has access to safe, secure, and sustainable housing.
Allocations Scheme (April 2024)	Ensures that those owed a statutory homelessness duty are given appropriate priority for social housing. Includes individuals and families who are homeless, in priority need, and unintentionally homeless aiming to help discharge the council’s duty and reduce time spent in temporary accommodation. Scheme includes quota queues – specific allocations set aside for vulnerable groups – including people supported by Adult or Children’s Social Care, those leaving care, survivors of domestic abuse, and those sleeping rough engaged with support services. Helps ensure those most at risk of homelessness or social exclusion can access safe, secure accommodation as part of their recovery and reintegration into the community. Recent changes have removed local connection requirements for those leaving care under 25 and former members of the Armed Forces, ensuring they can access social housing regardless of where they live – recognising the unique challenges they face when transitioning out of care or military service.
Development and Regeneration Programme 2025 - 2040	Council initiative to increase the supply of Council owned affordable housing, replace outdated stock, and deliver sustainable, energy-efficient homes that support housing stability and help prevent homelessness.
Tackling Inequality Strategy 2023–2026	Focuses on reducing disparities in health, housing, and access to services. Supports the homelessness strategy’s emphasis on prevention, inclusion, and equitable service delivery.

Relevant strategy or policy	Link to Reading’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 – 30
<p>Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021 - 2030</p>	<p>Recognises housing as a key social determinant of health where homelessness is both a cause and consequence of poor health. Supports integrated mental health and substance misuse services, access to primary care, and hospital discharge planning to prevent homelessness. Aligns with the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to ensure that local needs drive service planning and delivery.</p>
<p>NHS 10-Year Plan (2019 – 2029)</p>	<p>Recognises that people experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping face significantly poorer health outcomes and often rely heavily on urgent and emergency care. Supports targeted, integrated care pathways – particularly in A&E – to improve access to primary and secondary health services, reduce health inequalities, and prevent avoidable hospital admissions. It aligns with the Core20PLUS5 approach to tackling health disparities and promotes trauma-informed, person-centred care for all socially excluded groups including those who are homeless or rough sleeping.</p>
<p>Adult Care Strategy 2019–2022</p>	<p>Prioritises prevention, independence, and integrated support for vulnerable adults, such as people with mental health needs or disabilities. Promotes early intervention, person-centred care, multi-agency working, trauma-informed care and a commitment to safeguarding and improving outcomes for people with complex needs, aligning with homelessness and rough sleeping strategy priorities and principles.</p>
<p>Domestic Abuse and Safe Accommodation Strategy 2023–2026</p>	<p>Ensures victim-survivors of domestic abuse have access to safe housing. Prioritises early intervention, trauma-informed support, safeguarding, multi-agency working and addressing the complex needs of vulnerable residents. Aims to ensure that those fleeing domestic abuse are not further traumatised by housing insecurity, aligning closely with homelessness prevention priorities and principles.</p>

Relevant strategy or policy	Link to Reading’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 – 30
<p>Community Safety and Serious Violence Strategy 2023–2026</p>	<p>Aims to tackle serious violence, anti-social behaviour, and exploitation – issues that intersect with rough sleeping. For example, individuals sleeping rough are more vulnerable to violence and exploitation, and their presence in public spaces can be associated with community safety concerns. Supports trauma-informed, multi-agency approaches to safeguarding and early intervention and outlines the Community Safety Partnership’s commitment to a public health approach by addressing the root causes of crime and disorder which can contribute to housing insecurity and homelessness.</p>
<p>Customer Experience Strategy 2020–2024</p>	<p>Promotes accessible, responsive, and person-centred services. Supports early intervention, reduces barriers to access, and ensures vulnerable residents receive timely assistance through joined-up systems and a “tell us once” approach. Commits to ensuring that all residents, including those at risk of homelessness, can engage with the Council at a time and place of their choosing, using any device, while recognising that some individuals will need additional support.</p>
<p>Empty Homes Strategy 2020–2026</p>	<p>Aims to bring long-term vacant properties back into use, increasing housing availability and improving neighbourhood conditions. Supports homelessness prevention by seeking to expand housing supply.</p>
<p>Leaving Care Service Action Plan 2023/24 (Published by Children’s Services as Brighter Futures for Children)</p>	<p>Supports young people aged 16–25 transitioning out of care with housing, education, and health services. Promotes early intervention and stable accommodation to prevent homelessness among those leaving care.</p>
<p>Care Leavers’ Strategy (Local offer) (Published by Children’s Services as Brighter Futures for Children)</p>	<p>Directly supports care-experienced young people aged 16–25, a group at high risk of homelessness. Outlines housing, education, employment, and health support, aligning with early intervention and prevention goals in the homelessness strategy.</p>
<p>Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2024–2026 (Published by Children’s Services as Brighter Futures for Children)</p>	<p>Focuses on ensuring there are enough suitable placements for children in care. Helps prevent housing instability and supports smoother transitions out of care, reducing the risk of homelessness.</p>

Relevant strategy or policy	Link to Reading’s Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 – 30
<p>Youth Justice Plan 2024–25 (Published by Children’s Services as Brighter Futures for Children)</p>	<p>Young people involved in the justice system are at increased risk of homelessness. Promotes integrated support and rehabilitation, helping to reduce reoffending and housing instability.</p>
<p>Alternative Provision Strategic Framework 2024–2027 (Published by Children’s Services as Brighter Futures for Children)</p>	<p>Supports children and young people with complex needs who may be at risk of exclusion and future homelessness. Ensures inclusive education and support pathways, contributing to long-term stability and resilience.</p>
<p>Brighter Futures for Children Business Plan 2024–25 and Three-Year Strategy 2023–26 (Published by Children’s Services as Brighter Futures for Children)</p>	<p>Sets the strategic direction for children’s services in Reading. Emphasises early help, prevention, and partnership working – core principles shared with the homelessness strategy.</p>
<p>Sanctuary Strategy 2025–2028 and Action Plan</p>	<p>Aims to make Reading a welcoming place for refugees and asylum seekers, many of whom are at risk of homelessness or housing insecurity.</p>
<p>Private Sector Renewal and Disabled Adaptations Policy</p>	<p>Supports access to safe and suitable housing, particularly for vulnerable individuals, aligning with the strategy’s aims for sustainable accommodation pathways.</p>
<p>Housing Standards Enforcement Policy (including HMOs)</p>	<p>Ensures quality and safety in housing, especially in the private rented sector, which is a key part of homelessness prevention.</p>
<p>Antisocial Behaviour Policy</p>	<p>Links to tenancy sustainment and community safety, both of which are important for preventing repeat homelessness.</p>
<p>Modern Slavery Transparency Statement</p>	<p>Addresses exploitation and safeguarding, relevant to rough sleeping and hidden homelessness among vulnerable populations.</p>
<p>Social Value Policy</p>	<p>Encourages commissioning and procurement that delivers community benefit, including support for vulnerable and homeless individuals.</p>
<p>Team Reading People Strategy</p>	<p>Focuses on workforce development, which supports the delivery of trauma-informed, person-centred homelessness services to improve accessibility and provide positive outcomes.</p>

Data sets for comparison

2021 Census

Data from the 2021 Census has provided us with a more up-to-date and detailed understanding of Reading's population, economy, housing market, labour market, and other key socio-economic characteristics. This refreshed insight helps us to better understand the context in which homelessness and rough sleeping occur in our town.

Recognising the challenges and pressures highlighted by this data is essential. It enables the Council to shape more informed, targeted, and effective responses within our homelessness and rough sleeping strategy and action plan.

To note, Census 2021 data were adjusted to account for non-responses, ensuring results represent the entire usually resident population on Census Day. Specific guidance was provided for groups such as furloughed workers and students to maintain accurate classification within the economically active population and usual residence. Changes in question wording for disability improved alignment with the Equality Act 2010, enhancing data quality. Age-standardised proportions, based on the 2013 European Standard Population, were used to enable fair comparisons across time and regions, and all percentages were rounded to one decimal place, which may cause minor discrepancies in totals.

ONS comparison clusters

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) groups local areas across the UK into 'K-means' clusters based on shared characteristics. These clusters help councils and policymakers compare places facing similar challenges or opportunities. In these datasets, Reading is part of Global Cluster D – a broad grouping of local authorities which it is stated have similar profiles across key indicators such as economy, health, education, housing, and more. However, Global Cluster D contains a significant number of London local authority areas, therefore, a South East and nearest neighbour comparator has been applied instead.

ONS determined statistical nearest neighbour clusters are smaller, more focused groups of similar places and encompass a list of the most similar areas for each local authority. This is achieved by measuring how alike places are based on shared features, not physical distance. They use a formula and chart to find the most common levels of similarity. To make sure the comparisons are meaningful, they set a limit on how different places can be to still count as "similar."

The following authority areas are considered to be Reading's statistical nearest neighbours in 2025, and these are the local authorities that the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) use in discussion about comparisons and performance with Reading as a local authority:

- Reading
- Bracknell Forest
- Bristol
- Milton Keynes
- Portsmouth
- Slough
- Southampton
- Swindon
- Coventry
- Derby
- Manchester
- Newcastle upon Tyne
- Peterborough
- Thurrock
- Trafford
- York

H-CLIC data

Local authorities are required to submit Homelessness Case Level Information Collection (H-CLIC) data to the MHCLG every quarter. This statutory return captures detailed information on households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including demographics, support needs, accommodation outcomes, and how duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act have been discharged. The data is collated to monitor national trends, inform funding decisions, and enable benchmarking across councils. While H-CLIC provides valuable insights, it has limitations – such as underrepresentation of hidden homelessness and reliance on accurate and consistent local recording by Homelessness Prevention teams. The data is published by the MHCLG and used to support policy development, performance monitoring, and strategic planning at both local and national levels.

It is important to note that in April 2024, all Housing teams at Reading Borough Council transitioned to a new case management system for recording homelessness assessments and outcomes. Data from the previous system was migrated in bulk, which may have introduced some initial anomalies in reporting. As with any system change, there is a period of adjustment while officers become familiar with new processes and data/monitoring teams refine their understanding of input and output requirements. While the overall aim is to improve data quality and consistency, these transitional factors should be considered when interpreting early data from the new system in 2024/25. In cases where pre-case management system change data is considered more accurate, representative, and/or reliable, this has been quoted or used.

Reading's Changing Profile: Insights from Census 2021

Population and demography

Reading's population passed 170,000

The population of Reading increased by 11.9%, from under 155,700 in 2011 to around 174,200 in 2021. Refreshed and most recent mid-year figures in 2022 showed a further increase to 174,820. This is a higher increase than the overall population of the South East (7.5%) and higher than the overall population of England (up 6.6% since the 2011 census).

What the population data tells us:

Rapid growth places added pressure on local housing supply and support services. Increases in population require interventions and resourcing to ensure housing options, homelessness prevention and rough sleeping services can meet increased demand, so that the Council are equipped to support a growing and increasingly diverse population.

Increase in median age from 33 to 35 years of age

The number of people aged 50 to 64 years rose by around 6,200 (28.7%) whilst the number of residents aged 4 years and under fell by around 1,700 (14.2% decrease).

What the population data tells us:

Homelessness and rough sleeping housing pathways should be age-inclusive, ensuring that there is suitable accommodation and support for older adults, including those approaching retirement who may be facing housing insecurity. Concurrently, early intervention and prevention services should ensure that young families receive a responsive service, and a balanced approach to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping is sustained.

Changes in household composition: an increase in households comprising a couple with dependent children

The percentage of households in Reading comprising a couple with dependent children rose from 19.3% in 2011 to 20.0% in 2021 and the percentage of households comprising a lone parent with dependent children remained the same since 2011. The percentage of households comprising a couple without children fell from 17.3% to 16.8%, while the percentage of households including a couple with only non-dependent children increased from 4.6% to 5.3%.

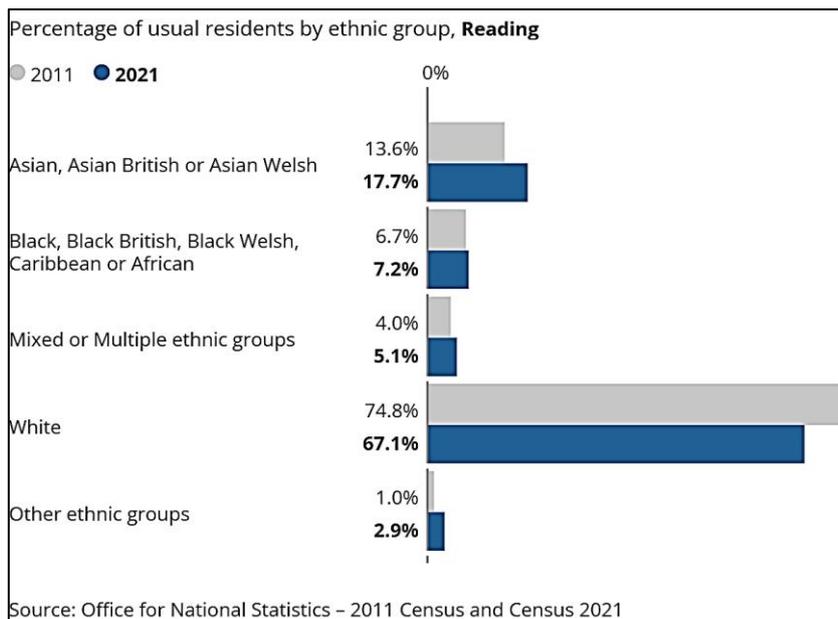
What the population data tells us:

The slight increase in households with dependent children and the stability of lone parent households in Reading, alongside a decline in couples without children and a rise in households with non-dependent children shows the importance of delivering services for families. This includes ensuring access to affordable, appropriately sized homes for families with children – both dependent and non-dependent – and strengthening support services for lone parents. Tailoring homelessness prevention efforts to reflect these household trends will help meet the evolving needs of Reading's residents and reduce housing instability and cyclical homelessness.

Ethnic groups in Reading

Between 2011 and 2021, Reading saw a notable increase in ethnic diversity, with the proportion of residents identifying as "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh" rising from 13.6% to 17.7%. Those identifying as "White" declined from 74.8% to 67.1%, and small increases were seen in people identifying as "Black" and "Mixed or Multiple" ethnic groups.

It is important to note that there are many factors that may be contributing to the changing ethnic composition of England and Wales, such as differing patterns of ageing, fertility, mortality, and migration. Changes may also be caused by differences in the way individuals chose to self-identify between censuses.

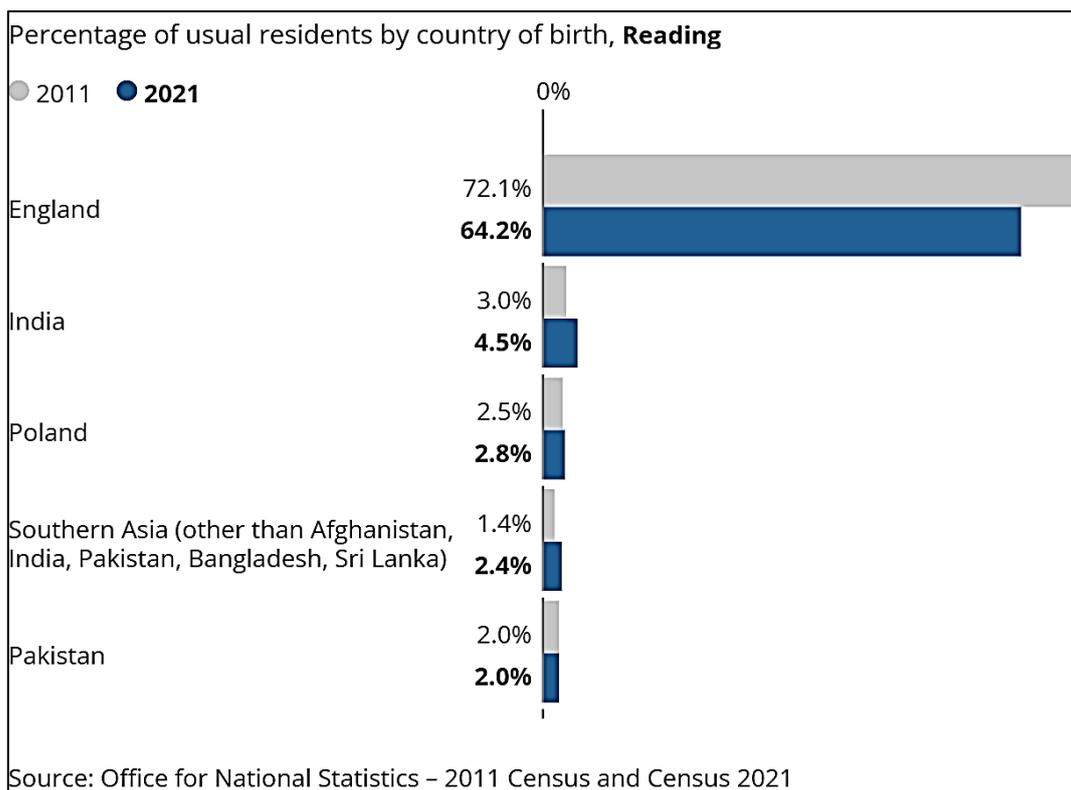


What the population data tells us:

To reflect Reading’s growing ethnic diversity, particularly the increase in residents identifying as "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh", Reading should embed equity and cultural responsiveness across all homelessness and rough sleeping services. This includes improving access through multilingual resources, engaging with diverse communities to co-design services, and ensuring staff are trained in cultural competence to better support individuals from all ethnic backgrounds and respond to the needs of a diverse population.

Reading residents' country of birth

In the 2021 Census, 64.2% of Reading residents reported England as their country of birth, down from 72.1% in 2011, reflecting the town’s growing diversity. There was an increase in the number of residents born in India and Poland.



What the population data tells us:

Increases in residents born abroad suggests that we need to ensure that homelessness and rough sleeping services, interventions and housing pathways are culturally responsive. This includes access to information and services through translated materials, culturally sensitive outreach, and partnerships with voluntary and community sector organisations that support legal migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers to ensure early access to housing support and early intervention services.

Disability in Reading¹

In 2021, 6.2% of Reading residents identified as being disabled and ‘limited a lot’, down from 7.8% in 2011. The proportion identifying as ‘limited a little’ remained stable at around 9.7%. The percentage of residents identifying as not disabled increased marginally to 84.1%.

What the population data tells us:

While the overall proportion of residents identifying as disabled has declined, there remains a significant need for maintaining and enhancing accessible homelessness and support services. This includes ensuring physical accessibility, targeted support across varying levels of disability and for those with fluctuating or less visible needs and embedding inclusive design and service delivery across all homelessness preventions and interventions.

¹ Age-standardised proportions are used throughout this data. This enables comparisons between populations over time and across geographies, as they account for differences in the population size and age structure.

Health in Reading²

In 2021, 46.8% of Reading residents reported being in very good health – an increase from 44.3% in 2011 – while the proportion reporting bad or very bad health slightly declined³.

Despite this, in 2021, the town ranked in the bottom 30% of local authorities in England for overall health, with a Health Index Score of 94.0 where a score of 100 represents average levels of health in England in 2015 and a higher number means better health and a lower number means worse health. People identified as homeless in the 2021 Census were more than twice as likely to report poor health or disability compared to the general population.

What the population data tells us:

There is a continued need to integrate health and housing support, recognising the link between poor health and housing instability. This includes strengthening partnerships with adult social care and health services, embedding wellbeing support across strategic priorities, developing preventative interventions for individuals at risk of homelessness due to health-related vulnerabilities and maintaining and improving accessibility standards.

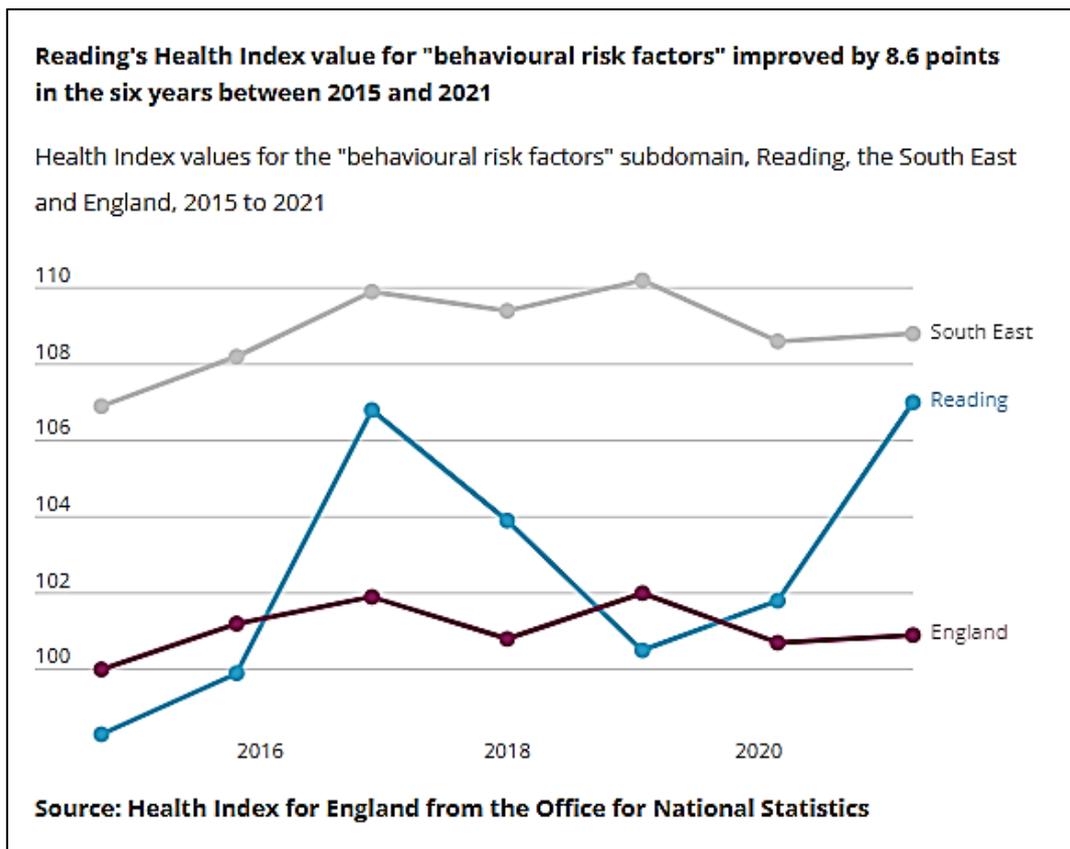
Behavioural risk factors and support needs

Behavioural risk factors, according to Health Index definitions, include alcohol misuse, drug misuse, healthy eating, physical activity, sedentary behaviour, sexually transmitted infections, and smoking.

Drug and alcohol misuse in Reading remain difficult to measure accurately due to underreporting and changes in data collection during the pandemic. However, Reading's Health Index Score for behavioural risk factors improved from 98.3 in 2015 to 107.0 in 2021, moving the area from being among the worst 40% of local authority areas, closer to the national average. This improvement was largely driven by increased physical activity and a reduction in sexually transmitted infections.

² These data reflect people's own opinions in describing their overall health on a five-point scale, from very good to very bad.

³ Census 2021 was conducted during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This may have influenced how people perceived and rated their health and therefore may have affected how people chose to respond.



What the population data tells us:

Recognising the link between behavioural health and housing vulnerability is crucial in preventing homelessness and rough sleeping. This includes proven links between co-morbidities, substance misuse and early deaths due to experiences of rough sleeping. There is a continued need to invest in preventative adult social care and health services, as well as working alongside health partners to deliver targeted support for substance misuse.

Reading's population will continue to change and grow over the next 10 years

According to the Office of National Statistics⁴, the national population is projected to grow by 4.9 million (7.3%) between mid-2022 and mid-2032, rising from 67.6 million to 72.5 million when considering factors such as migration, decreases in births and life expectancy improvements. The age structure of the population is expected to shift significantly, with the number of people at state pension age projected to increase by 1.7 million (13.8%) over the same period. This demographic change, alongside continued population growth, will place increasing pressure on housing, health, and social care systems.

While the 2021 Census offers insight into emerging patterns and potential housing demand in Reading over the next decade, it is not without limitations. A range of national and international factors, such as economic conditions, migration trends, and policy changes, may influence how these projections unfold.

4

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/bulletin/s/nationalpopulationprojections/2022based>

Wider determinants of homelessness

Poverty and homelessness are deeply interconnected. They often form a self-perpetuating cycle, where economic hardship increases the risk of housing instability, and poor housing or homelessness in turn undermines opportunities for employment, education, and wellbeing. More information on wider determinants of homelessness can be on the Reading Data Observatory: <https://reading.berkshireobservatory.co.uk/>.

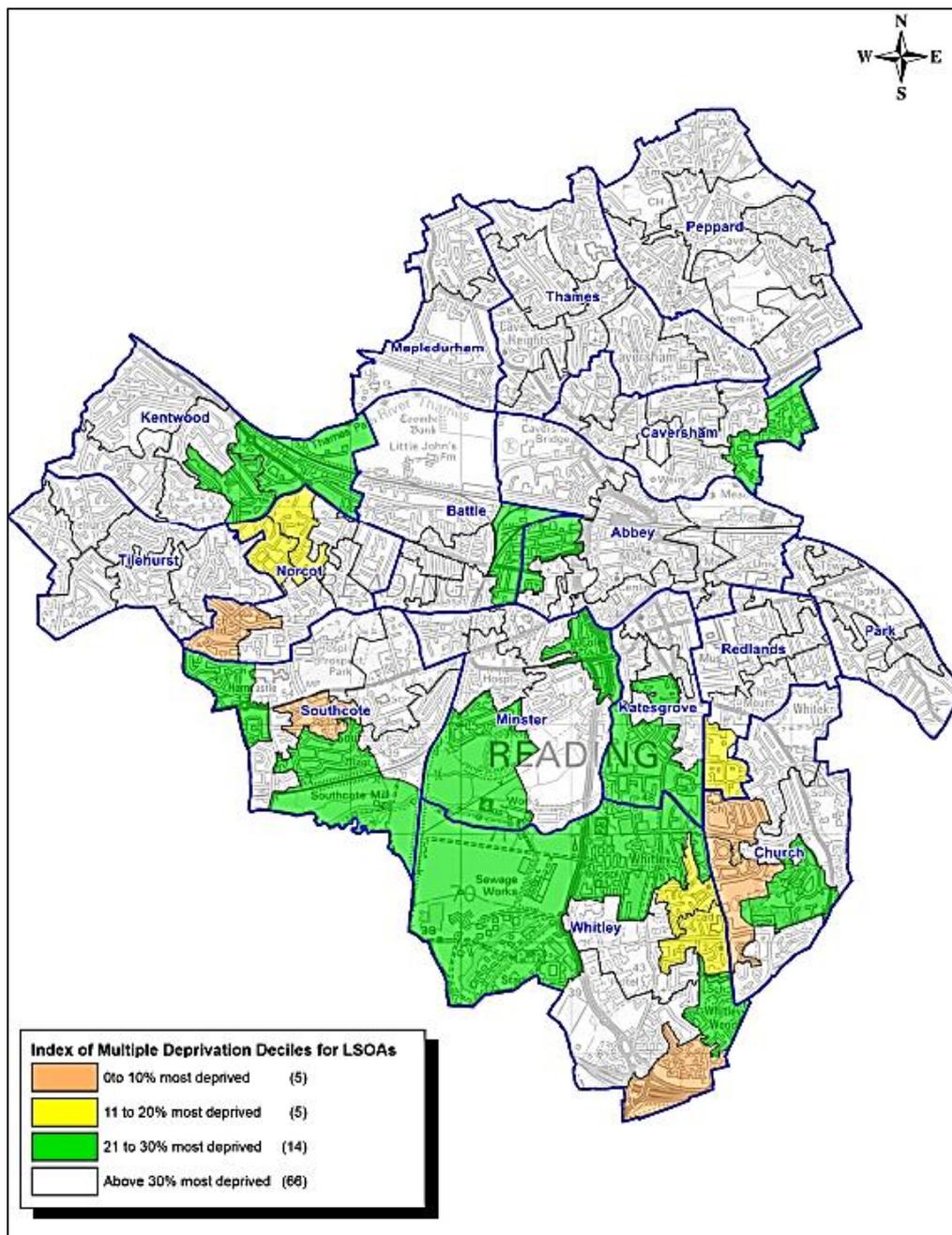
Impact of the cost-of-living crisis

The ongoing cost-of-living crisis – characterised by rising inflation, energy bills, and housing costs – has placed significant financial pressure on households across England. For many, especially those on low incomes or in insecure housing, this has increased the risk of homelessness and rough sleeping. Local authorities and support services have seen growing demand, as more individuals and families struggle to afford basic living costs and maintain stable accommodation. The cost-of-living crisis has compounded the level and number of households experiencing deprivation in England.

Household deprivation in Reading

The economic success of Reading does not reach all communities in Reading. According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019, Reading ranks as the 141st most deprived local authority out of 317 in England – placing it in the middle nationally (where 1st is the most deprived). However, this overall ranking conceals significant variation within the borough. For comparison, Oxford ranks 166th and Milton Keynes 170th - both less deprived than Reading – while Slough (107th), Luton (70th), and Southampton (55th) are more deprived. Although Reading is less deprived than some towns with similar demographics, it still faces notable challenges. Five of its Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) – small neighbourhood-level geographies used for statistical reporting – are among the 10% most deprived in the country. This indicates a high level of disadvantage within these neighbourhoods of Reading, where residents are more likely to experience poverty – especially child poverty – unemployment, poor health, lower educational attainment, exposure to crime, and barriers to housing and services.

An estimated 15.6% of children in Reading – around one in six – are growing up in relative low-income families, a figure that rises significantly in the borough's neighbourhoods identified among the 10% most deprived in England (IMD 2019).



Source: Reading Borough Council website (IMD 2019)

Reading’s Social Exclusion Analysis 2024

Access to housing remains a significant element of social exclusion in Reading and the Social Exclusion Analysis supports the housing market issues and wider household deprivation in Reading already outlined. Evidence from this analysis suggests that access to housing for lower income families is hindered by affordability and availability, rather than barriers to accessing services.

The quality of the living environment, which includes housing conditions, air quality, and road traffic accidents, has shown some improvement. Reading is now ranked 119th nationally in this domain, and no LSOAs fall within the 5% most deprived, compared to three in 2015. However, the analysis supports that overcrowding remains an issue, with 10.1% of households

having an occupancy rating of -1 or less, indicating insufficient space. The proportion of non-decent homes has improved slightly, falling to 11.5% in 2024 from 13.9% the previous year, but remains a concern. Additionally, 2.1% of households lack central heating, a figure higher than both the South East and national averages. Abbey, Church, and Park wards exhibit the highest levels of overcrowding and heating inadequacy.

Housing challenges intersect with other areas of social exclusion. Fuel poverty affects 11% of households in Reading, disproportionately impacting those in the private rented sector and in older, less energy-efficient homes. Food poverty is also linked, with rising housing costs reducing disposable income and increasing reliance on emergency food parcels and local low-cost pantry-type services operated by the VCFS. Health outcomes are similarly affected, with poor housing conditions contributing to respiratory illnesses, mental health issues, and higher rates of infant mortality and dental decay.

Digital exclusion is a related concern. Poor housing conditions often correlate with limited digital access, and two LSOAs in Reading are among the 10% most digitally excluded nationally. Older people and disabled residents face compounded housing challenges, including accessibility issues and income deprivation. Pension Credit claimant data shows concentrations in more deprived wards, highlighting the place-based dimension of housing-related exclusion.

What the wider determinants of homelessness data tells us:

To break the cycle of poverty and homelessness in Reading, a targeted, place-based approach should focus on the borough's most deprived neighbourhoods to address inequalities, prevent homelessness, and improve housing standards. Poverty reduction support should be embedded into homelessness prevention services. Services must be co-produced with communities and delivered through multi-agency, place-based outreach that address the wider determinants of homelessness – health, education, and financial insecurity. This would ensure that support is both holistic and locally responsive and that safe, stable accommodation becomes a foundation for economic participation and social mobility.

The Social Exclusion Analysis 2024 shows that housing in Reading is a critical factor in understanding and addressing social exclusion. The borough faces significant challenges in affordability, tenure security, and housing quality, all of which are closely linked to broader issues of poverty, health, and inequality. Addressing these interconnected issues will require coordinated, multi-agency strategies that prioritise prevention, affordability, and inclusive access to safe and secure housing.

The extent of homelessness in Reading: Demand for services and accommodation needs

Understanding the extent of homelessness

Homelessness manifests in many forms, often making it challenging to capture its full extent. To ensure this review presents as complete a picture as possible, we have adopted as broad and inclusive approach as possible.

The categories considered in this analysis are:

- Households to whom we owe a statutory duty to prevent or relieve homelessness.
- Households for whom we have accepted a Main Housing Duty.
- Households currently residing in temporary accommodation.
- Households on the General Register for social housing, prioritised in the highest preference bands.
- Individuals experiencing rough sleeping.
- Those facing hidden homelessness, such as sofa surfing or living in insecure or unsuitable housing.

By examining these specific, but interconnected groups, we aim to better understand the pressures on our housing system and identify strategic opportunities for intervention and support.

Local authorities are legally required to support eligible households who are either homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness – defined as being within 56 days of losing their accommodation. This duty includes both preventing homelessness before it occurs and helping those already homeless to secure suitable housing. Importantly, this support is provided regardless of whether a household meets the criteria for priority need or being deemed intentionally homeless. In Reading, this statutory duty is fulfilled by the Homelessness Prevention Team at Reading Borough Council.

If the Council is unable to prevent or relieve a household's homelessness, a further assessment is carried out to determine whether the household qualifies for the main homelessness duty under the Housing Act 1996. This duty is triggered when a household is found to be eligible, in priority need, unintentionally homeless, and has a local connection. Once these criteria are met, the Council is legally required to secure suitable accommodation for the household. This represents the most substantial form of support available under homelessness legislation.

Local economic context: Understanding financial pressures and inequality in Reading

This section provides a snapshot of economic vulnerability and financial resilience in Reading, highlighting key indicators such as deprivation, employment, earnings, and benefit claims. Understanding the local labour market is essential for shaping recovery strategies and long-term planning. Economic growth, employment trends, and financial pressures all influence housing stability and the risk of homelessness.

Economic growth and jobs

Reading has consistently maintained a higher job density than both the South East and England, rising from 1.04 in 2010 to 1.14 in 2021, before a slight dip in 2022 and 2023. The total number of jobs in Reading has steadily increased from approximately 108,000 in 2010 to 138,000 in 2025, reflecting sustained growth in line with national and regional trends.

Employment and earnings

Employment levels among Reading residents aged 16 and over (excluding full-time students) remained stable between 2011 and 2021 at around 60%, outperforming regional and national averages, which saw slight declines. Unemployment fell from 4.3% to 3.2% over the same period, and the proportion of retired residents also declined slightly, indicating a strong and active local labour market.

According to the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), gross annual pay for full-time workers living in Reading is approximately £40,988 – slightly above the national and regional average – reflecting proximity to high-paying sectors and a resilient employment base.

Unemployment trends

Following historically low unemployment, Reading saw a sharp rise in unemployment benefit claims during the Covid-19 pandemic, with the rate increasing from 2.1% in 2019 to 5.2% in 2021 – but still below the national average. By 2025, unemployment had fallen to 3.5%, though it remains above pre-pandemic levels.

Educational and skills gaps

Census 2021 data shows that 34.5% of people experiencing homelessness in Reading reported having no qualifications, compared to 18.8% in the general population. This limits access to stable employment and, consequently, sustainable housing.

What the economic and financial resilience data tells us:

Economic vulnerabilities: While Reading maintains a high employment rate (83.0%) and above England average earnings (£40,988), rising Universal Credit claims (up 14% in July 2025, compared to August 2024) and a slight increase in unemployment (4.4% in August 2025) point to growing financial pressure. The local employment rate has declined since mid-2022, diverging from the stable upward trend seen in comparative areas. This suggests weakening labour market conditions and increased strain on residents, particularly those in low-paid or insecure jobs.

Pockets of deprivation: While Reading ranks mid-range nationally for overall deprivation, 3.09% of its neighbourhoods fall within the most deprived 10% in England – primarily due to income-related challenges – that will impact housing stability. This points to concentrated areas of need that require targeted support.

Support dependency: Nearly 5% of adults receive Council Tax Support, indicating a notable proportion of low-income households relying on local assistance.⁵

Reading's homelessness strategy needs to respond to rising financial strain, localised deprivation, and reliance on support services – factors that increase the risk of housing instability and rough sleeping. This can be addressed through targeted prevention in high-need areas, improved access to affordable housing, and co-ordinated services such as benefits advice, mental health support, and employment assistance for residents at risk.

In summary:

Reading has experienced sustained economic growth and high labour demand over the past decade, putting pressure on the local housing market. Affordable housing remains limited, so many workers live outside the town and commute in to access employment. A strong local labour market attracts inward migration and increases demand for housing and support services. Strong job density and a growing employment base can mean an opportunity to create inclusive employment pathways for those at risk of homelessness, and to integrate early intervention services that connect individuals to work to increase income and housing stability.

⁵ LGA Research, Local Government Association, 2025.

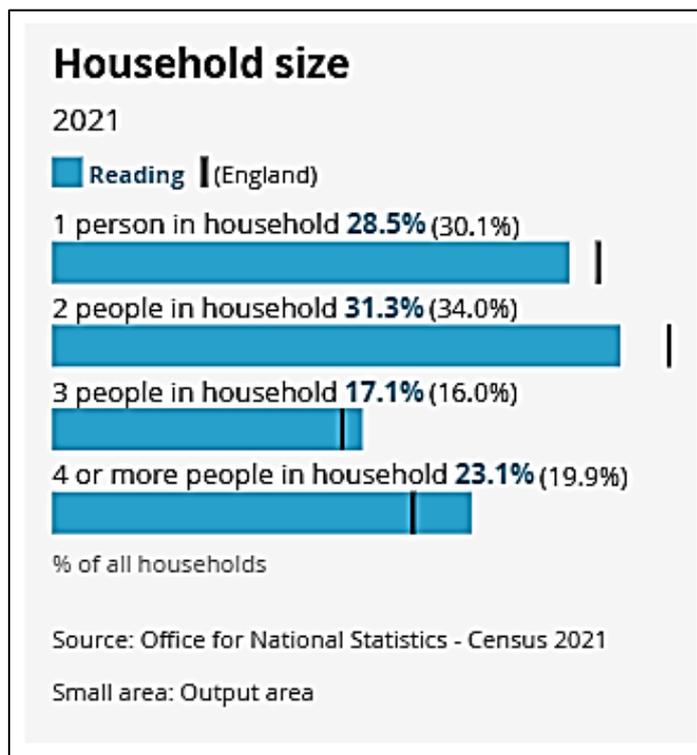
Local Housing Context: Access, affordability, and barriers to housing stability

This section of the report brings together a number of metrics to provide an overview of the affordability of housing, the availability of social housing and the number of households experiencing difficulties paying for their housing.

Factors affecting access to stable housing

Increased numbers of larger sized households

Census 2021 data shows a shift in Reading’s household composition toward larger households. While nationally 35.9% of households consist of three or more people, in Reading this figure is higher at 40.2%. This is driven by an increase in three-person households (17.1%) and households with four or more people (23.1%), indicating a decline in the proportion of smaller households made up of single people or couples.

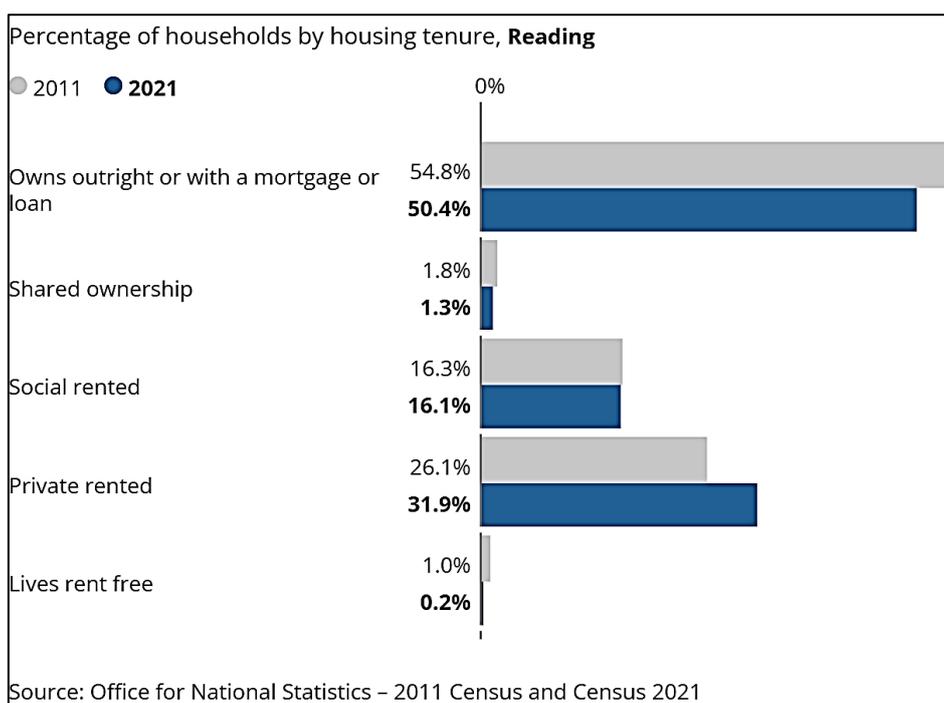


Larger households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, who require three or more bedrooms, are more difficult to accommodate in Reading due to a limited supply of suitably sized homes, low turnover rates, and development constraints that restrict the construction of larger properties. These homes are more expensive to build and maintain, and the affordability gap broadly widens with property size, making them less accessible to low-income families.

Social housing supply

In 2024, according to MHCLG Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS), Reading had 6,982 local authority dwellings, 4,709 private registered provider dwellings and 63,164 private sector dwellings – a total of 74,855 dwellings in Reading. Only 16% of all dwellings in Reading were social or affordable housing let by the local authority or a registered social housing provider.

The graph below shows the proportion of social housing compared to homeownership and private rented sector tenants.



Social housing demand

By the end of 2024/25, 4,462 households were on Reading’s Housing Register, rising to 4,675 by July 2025, with an average of 160 new applications submitted each month. Only 374 households were successfully housed in 2024/25 - fewer than 9% of applicants. Between April and July 2025, 645 new applications were received, while just 166 households were housed.

The majority of applicants (77%) fall into Band 4 or “No Priority for Housing,” with 1% in Band 1 (urgent need). Demand is highest for smaller homes, with 69% of applicants requiring one- or two-bedroom properties, and 7% of households registered as having a need for four or more bedrooms. This highlights limited availability for larger households. The adapted housing register – whilst ensuring best use of stock – creates the further pressure of 91 households requiring accessible homes.

All these figures – long waiting lists, high levels of new applications and few re-lets – highlight a persistent gap between demand and available social housing, with only a small proportion of applicants successfully accommodated.

What the factors affecting access to stable housing data tells us:

Reading's increase in larger households outlines the need for access to larger, affordable family homes and a housing strategy that reflects the borough's demographic demand for social rented. Reading's homelessness and rough sleeping strategy should strengthen support for people in private rented housing and prevent homelessness through early intervention. The Social Exclusion Analysis 2024 highlights that social housing is concentrated in wards such as Whitley, Norcot, and Southcote, while private renting is most prevalent in Abbey, Katesgrove, and Redlands. These patterns reflect broader inequalities in housing access and stability and highlight the opportunities for place-based targeted interventions in homelessness prevention.

Housing affordability in Reading

New Homes & Homeownership

Reading has seen a steady increase in the number of new, permanent homes completed since 2020, with 1,021 new builds available at the end of 2023-24.⁶ While this compares favourably to our nearest geographical neighbours, we know that Reading's constrained boundaries mean that the vast majority of these new homes are flats with no more than two bedrooms, located in premium blocks. Only 21% of these properties were affordable homes,⁷, meaning that four fifths of these properties, including the majority of Build to Rent units, do not increase the number of affordable homes available for Reading residents and most likely contribute to local rent rises.

The Census 2021 found the percentage of households who own their own home in Reading had decreased since 2011, and this was relatively low at 50.4% compared to 61% in England, and 66% across the South East. Houses have become considerably less affordable, locally, and regionally, especially for first time buyers. The cost-of-living crisis and increased interest rates also make housing affordability more challenging. While earnings have grown modestly, house prices have increased at a much faster rate, widening the affordability gap.

The housing affordability ratio compares local house prices to residents' annual earnings. A higher ratio means homes are less affordable. In 2024, Reading's ratio was 8.30, higher than the ONS nearest neighbour average figure of 7.70 and lower than the South East region figure of 9.54. This rose to over 10:1 by 2025, indication that house prices are more than 10 times the average annual income – well above traditional affordability thresholds. This suggests that homes are comparatively unaffordable for residents compared to similar areas.

Private rented sector

Increases in households privately renting

Between 2011 and 2021, Reading experienced the South East's second-largest increase in privately rented homes, rising from 26.1% to 31.9%, with only Slough seeing a greater rise. This growth highlights a shift in housing tenure, driven in part by affordability challenges and

⁶ [Indicators of House building, UK: permanent dwellings started and completed by local authority - Office for National Statistics](#)

⁷ Planning Committee [Annual Monitoring Report 2023-24](#)

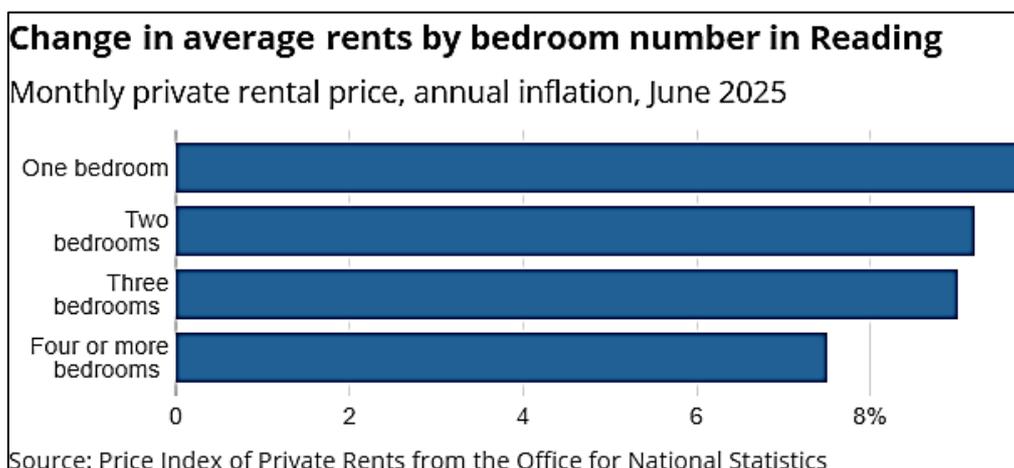
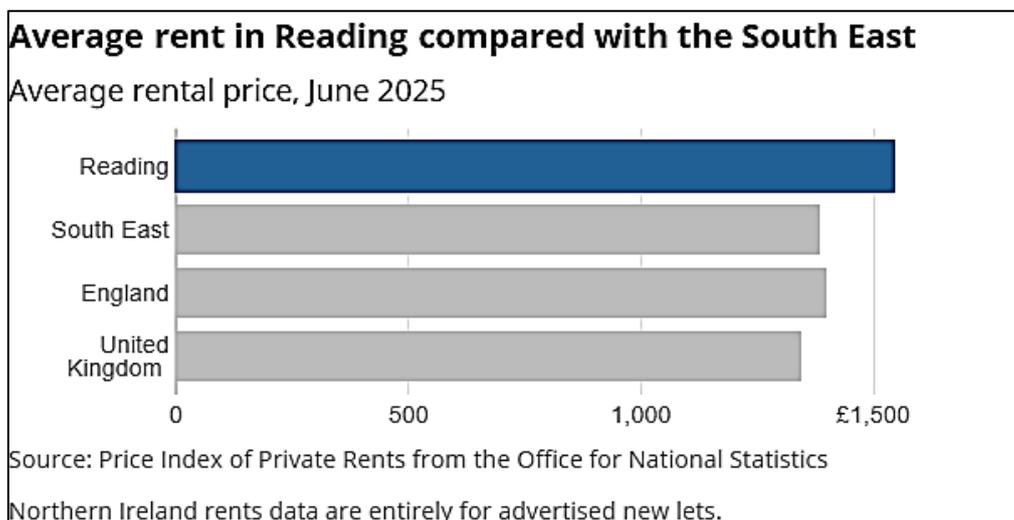
limited access to social housing. For many lower-income households, homeownership remains out of reach, and high demand for social housing means the private rented sector is often the only available option.

However, renting privately in Reading comes with significant cost pressures. In the financial year ending March 2023, private renters spent an average of 35.3% of their gross monthly income on rent. This exceeds the 30% affordability threshold used by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), meaning that housing costs are stretching household budgets. Compared to both the national and South East regional averages, Reading ranks among the less affordable areas outside of London for privately renting. This combination of rising demand, limited affordable alternatives, and high rental costs contributes to ongoing housing insecurity for many residents.

Increases in average private sector rents in Reading

Private rents in Reading rose to an average of £1,543 in June 2025, an annual increase of 9.0% from £1,415 in June 2024. This was higher than the rise in the South East (6.4%) over the year. Average rent for one bed properties rose by 9.8%, while the average for four-or-more bed properties increased by 7.5%.

The graphs below show how high Reading’s average private rented sector rents are, when compared regionally and nationally, and the significant % increase in average rents in Reading by number of bedrooms.

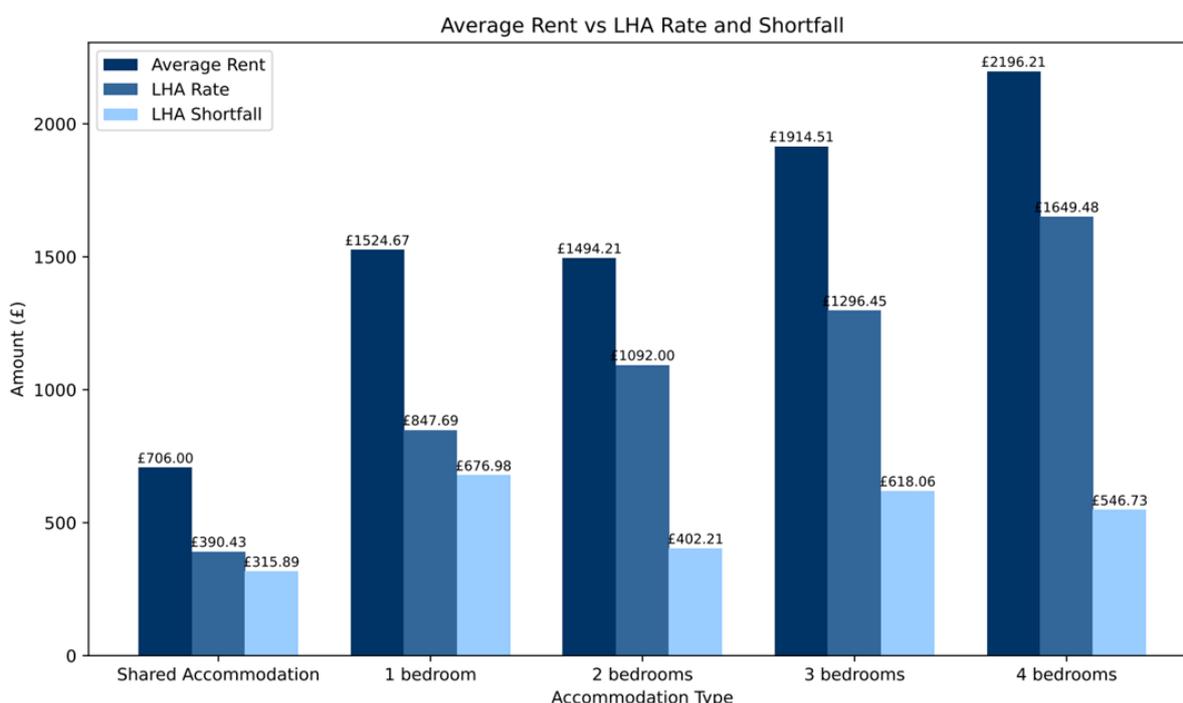


The average rent in Reading is £1,552 per month, while the average full-time salary is £40,988 a year. After tax, this means people are spending over half (57%) of their take-home pay just on rent. 70% of rent for private tenants is not covered by housing benefit support (Local Housing Allowance), leaving low-income renters unable to pay their bills and at risk of arrears or losing their home.

The growing gap between LHA and private rented sector rents

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is designed to support low-income households with the cost of renting in the private sector. However, in Reading, average private rents are consistently higher than LHA rates across all property sizes, with monthly shortfalls ranging from over £300 for a one-bedroom property to over £600 for a three-bedroom home. This gap places significant financial pressure on tenants, many of whom must cover the difference from limited income, increasing the risk of rent arrears and eviction. To help bridge this gap, local authorities often rely on temporary measures such as Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs), though these are not a long-term solution. Landlord incentive schemes are also used to encourage landlords to let to tenants on benefits, but the affordability gap can still deter participation. Compounding the issue, LHA rates have remained largely static for several years — frozen from 2020 to 2024 and now set to remain unchanged until at least 2026. Although there was a one-off uplift in April 2024 based on rental data from September 2023, this did not keep pace with rising rents, leaving many households struggling to afford suitable accommodation.

The graph below clearly highlights LHA shortfalls in Reading, accurate as of February 2025.⁸



The LHA shortfall has a disproportionate impact on households entitled to the shared accommodation rate; that is, single applicants under the age of 35. For this group, average Reading rent is 180% of the LHA available to them. For family accommodation, the least

⁸ Compiled from local private rented market snapshots in February 2025, with 1 bedroomed properties comprising both 'true' 1 beds and studio flats.

affordable size is a 3 bedroomed property, with average Reading rent at nearly 150% of the available LHA.

Additional pressure on the local private rented sector

The increased quota of dispersed accommodation in Reading for national programmes supporting refugees, asylum seekers (via the Home Office), and prison leavers (through CAS3) – has placed additional pressure on the local private rented sector. These national providers often operate outside LHA constraints, offering higher rents and faster turnaround times, which makes the market more competitive and reduces the availability of affordable properties for local authority use. In Reading, the Home Office have stated their intention to acquire an additional 414 units of accommodation, with 356 achieved to date. As a result, the Council faces challenges in securing PRS accommodation for homelessness prevention and relief duties, including being outbid by providers not bound by LHA rates. This has likely disrupted local supply chains, increased costs, and reduced the effectiveness of procurement efforts – impacting the Council’s ability to meet local housing need and placing further strain on temporary accommodation resources.

What the housing affordability data tells us:

Reading faces growing housing affordability pressures that must inform its strategy. Homeownership has declined, and house prices now exceed ten times the average annual income, making ownership increasingly out of reach. At the same time, the private rented sector has expanded but remains unaffordable for many, with renters spending over 35% of their income on rent. Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates have remained largely static since 2020 and fall well short of actual rents, leaving tenants to cover large gaps from limited income. This increases the risk of arrears and eviction, and places pressure on local support such as Discretionary Housing Payments and landlord incentive schemes. Reading’s strategy should prioritise linking to the Council’s Housing Strategy to increase access to genuinely affordable housing that reflects the need for access to larger, affordable family homes, strengthening tenancy support for renters at risk of eviction or financial hardship and advocating for LHA reform.

Barriers to housing stability

Housing Benefit and Universal Credit (housing costs) recipients in Reading

In 2025, 6.52% of households in Reading received housing benefit - above the South East average (4.75%) and ONS nearest neighbour average (6.44%). A further 7.95% of households received Universal Credit, although data regarding the proportion of these claims which included housing costs is not available regionally. This reflects a high level of financial need compared to similar areas.⁹

Reading’s higher rate of housing benefit and Universal Credit claims show that many households struggle with rent. Reading’s homelessness and rough sleeping strategy should include financial help such as support with rent, continuing to work and build relationships with landlords to prevent evictions, and early identification of risk and the need for tenancy

⁹ Department for Work and Pensions, Housing Benefit, [Proportion of households in recipient of housing benefits ; Households in receipt of Universal Credit by Local Authority](#) Data updated: 26 Aug 2025.

sustainment support for people before they lose their homes – especially where Reading are not in a position to develop large-scale social housing and are heavily reliant on the private rented sector for housing supply.

Impact of Welfare Reform on household income

As of May 2025, 673 households in Reading had their income reduced due to the benefit cap. The cap limits the total amount of benefits a household can receive, currently set at £1,835 per month for couples and lone parents with children, and £1,229 per month for single adults without children. This shows a growing pressure on families in receipt of Universal Credit.

The majority of affected households in Reading are families with children, with 65% headed by single parents. These families often face significant shortfalls in their housing support. For example, a couple with one child renting a two-bedroom property may be entitled to £2,129 per month in benefits, but due to the cap, their Universal Credit is reduced by £294, leaving them with £1,835 – the maximum allowed. This reduction makes both private rented and social housing unaffordable for many.

Households are exempt from the benefit cap if someone in the household is working and earning above a set threshold – currently around £722 per month. This means that entering paid employment or increasing working hours can remove the cap, making work a key route to financial stability and housing security for affected families.

The cap also interacts with other policies like the two-child limit, which affects over 1,000 households in Reading and contributes to 28% child poverty locally. Families with more than two children lose £3,455 per year per child, further deepening financial hardship and housing insecurity¹⁰.

Rent arrears in Reading

At the end of 2023/24, tenants in Reading owed £1.6 million in rent, higher than the South East average of £1.4 million. This total excludes other bills like council tax and utilities.¹¹

The high level of rent arrears in Reading shows many tenants are struggling to pay rent. Reading's strategy should include early tenancy sustainment support, access to debt advice, and financial support and early advice to prevent arrears from leading to eviction.

Mortgage and landlord possession claims in Reading

Reading shows steady housing stress, with possession claim rates consistently above the South East and ONS nearest neighbour averages.

Landlord possession rates ranged from 10.6 to 15.8 per 10,000 households – often twice the South East figure and higher than ONS statistical nearest neighbour rates which ranged from 9.2 – 11.5. Mortgage claims also increased, reaching 2.9 per 10,000 in Q2 2025, slightly above the regional and ONS nearest neighbour averages of 2.5.

¹⁰ [Benefit cap - Reading Borough Council](#)

¹¹ MHCLG, Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS), [Current tenants' cumulative arrears of rent at the end of the last full collection period excluding arrears of council tax, water rates and heating/service charges \(in £s\)](#), Data updated: 01 Jul 2025.

In the same quarter, Reading recorded 79 landlord and 19 mortgage possession claims, highlighting financial strain and the risk of housing loss for many residents. Both landlord and mortgage claims show spikes in Q3 and Q4 of each year.¹² The data points to ongoing pressure, particularly in the private rented sector, though less severe than in similar urban areas.

Reading's strategy should focus on preventing evictions in the private rented sector, offering mortgage support and debt advice to households under financial strain, and responding to seasonal spikes in possession claims with timely interventions.

What the barriers to housing stability data tells us:

Reading's housing data shows high financial vulnerability among residents. More households receive housing benefit than the regional average, and rent arrears total £1.6 million, indicating widespread difficulty in meeting housing costs. Possession claims – both landlord and mortgage – are consistently above average, with seasonal spikes suggesting recurring financial stress. These trends highlight the need for Reading's strategy to focus on early intervention, tenancy sustainment, debt advice, financial support, and stronger engagement with landlords to prevent evictions, especially in the private rented sector.

In summary:

Reading faces significant housing challenges, with high rents, limited affordable housing, and a long waiting list for social housing. Many low-income households rely on the private rented sector and struggle to pay rent, as shown by high housing benefit claims and rising arrears. Reading's homelessness and rough sleeping strategy should focus on increasing access to affordable housing where possible, strengthening tenancy sustainment, offering financial, debt and mortgage support, and continuing to work with landlords to prevent evictions - especially given Reading's reliance on the private rented sector and limited capacity for large-scale development of social housing.

¹² Ministry of Justice, Mortgage and Landlord Possession Statistics, **Data updated:** 14 Aug 2025.

Local homelessness overview

Households seeking homelessness support

In Q4 2024/25, 397 households in Reading were owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty. Of these, 142 were homeless and 195 were at risk – highlighting the scale of housing vulnerability in the area.

Reading consistently sees higher levels of homelessness-related need than the South East average, with particularly sharp spikes in Q4 2023/24 when 763 households were assessed and 655 were either homeless or at risk – more than double the regional average of 318 assessments and 275 combined homeless/threatened cases.

Even in Q4 2024/25, numbers remained elevated, with 397 households owed a duty, including 142 homeless and 195 threatened with homelessness, compared to regional averages. These figures reflect sustained housing vulnerability and seasonal surges in demand.¹³

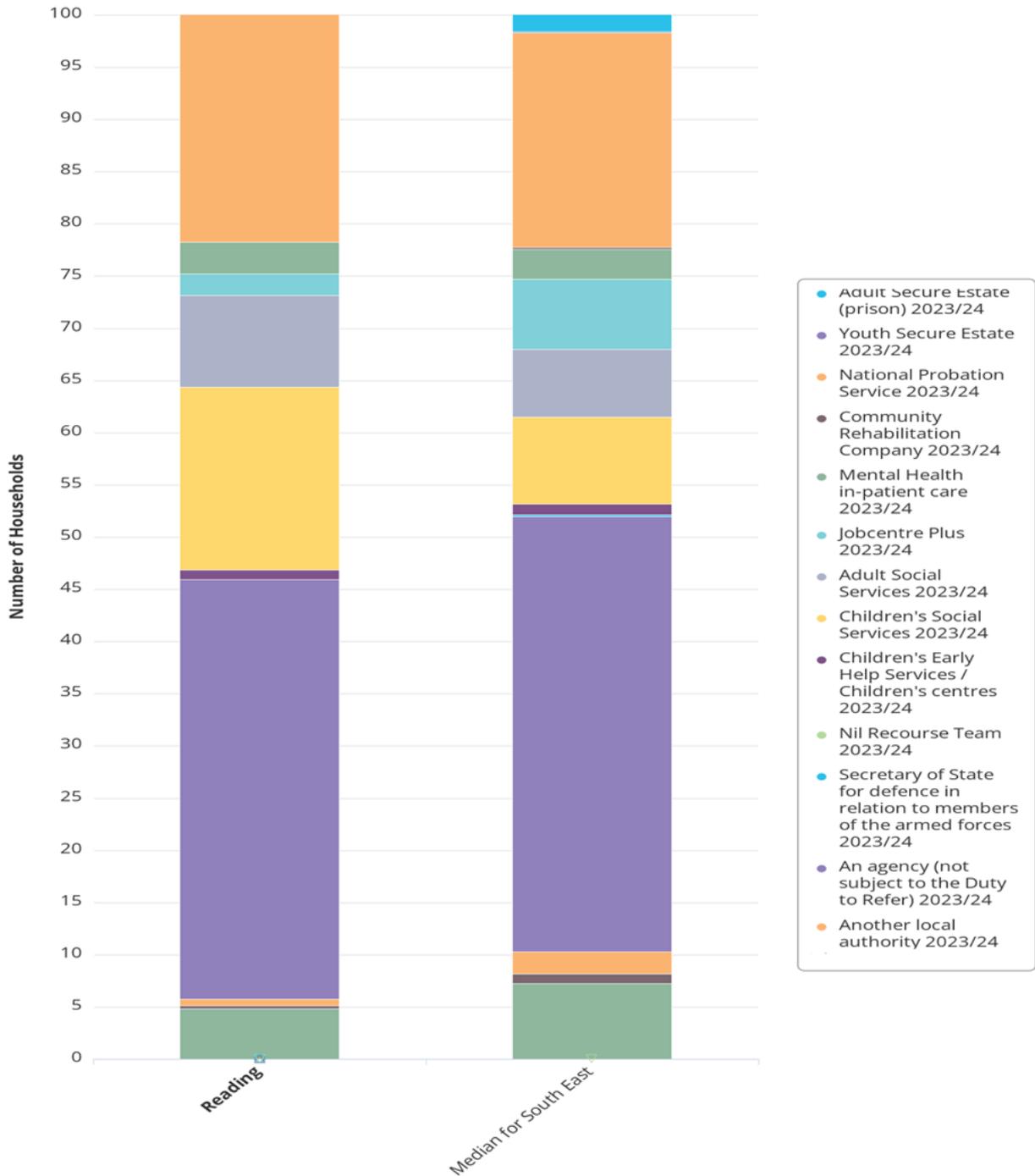
Reading's strategy must therefore scale up early intervention and prevention efforts, prepare for predictable seasonal pressures, and ensure resources match consistently high demand.

Households assessed as a result of a referral

This chart compares who referred households for homelessness assessments in Reading and the South East. In 2023/24 – most referrals in Reading came from agencies not obligated by the Duty to Refer.¹⁴

¹³ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 08 Aug 2025.

¹⁴ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 30 Oct 2024.



The graph compares the number of households referred under the Duty to Refer in Reading with the South East regional median across various statutory and non-statutory services in 2023/24.

Reading has a high overall volume of referrals from Jobcentre Plus, National Probation Service, Youth Secure Estate, and Children's Services, indicating strong engagement from these agencies. Referrals from Adult Social Services and Mental Health in-patient care are broadly in line with the regional median, while Community Rehabilitation Company and Adult Secure Estate (prison) referrals are lower, suggesting potential gaps in justice-related referral pathways.

Hospital A&E, urgent treatment centres and in-patient care referrals are significantly lower in Reading compared to the South East and ONS statistical nearest neighbour area medians. This suggests the need to strengthen referral pathways from hospitals, particularly given their frequent contact with individuals at risk of homelessness.

This pattern suggests that Reading has developed effective referral mechanisms with mainstream services, especially those working with families, young people, and individuals in contact with the criminal justice system. However, the lower engagement from prison, rehabilitation, and hospitals indicates areas where inter-agency collaboration could be strengthened to ensure more consistent identification and support for households at risk of homelessness.

Characteristics of main applicants owed a homelessness duty (prevention or relief)

This section presents an overview of the personal characteristics of the main applicants within each household that has been assessed as owed a prevention or relief duty in Reading during the financial year 2023/24.

Age of main applicant

Data shows the age breakdown of main applicants in households assessed for homelessness support in Reading, compared to the average, median, and highest figures for Reading's ONS nearest neighbours and the wider South East region. The largest age group in Reading is 25–34 years, followed by 35–44 years, which is consistent across both comparison sets. Reading has a slightly higher number of younger applicants aged 18–24 than both its statistical neighbours and the South East average. Older age groups (55+) are less represented in Reading than in areas with the highest figures. Very few applicants are aged 16–17 or 75+, and the “Not known” category is minimal, suggesting good data quality. This suggests homelessness in Reading is most common among young to middle-aged adults, especially those aged 25–44, with a slightly higher proportion of younger adults than in similar areas across both datasets.¹⁵ This could inform targeted prevention and support strategies for younger people at risk of homelessness to reduce approaches and intervene earlier.

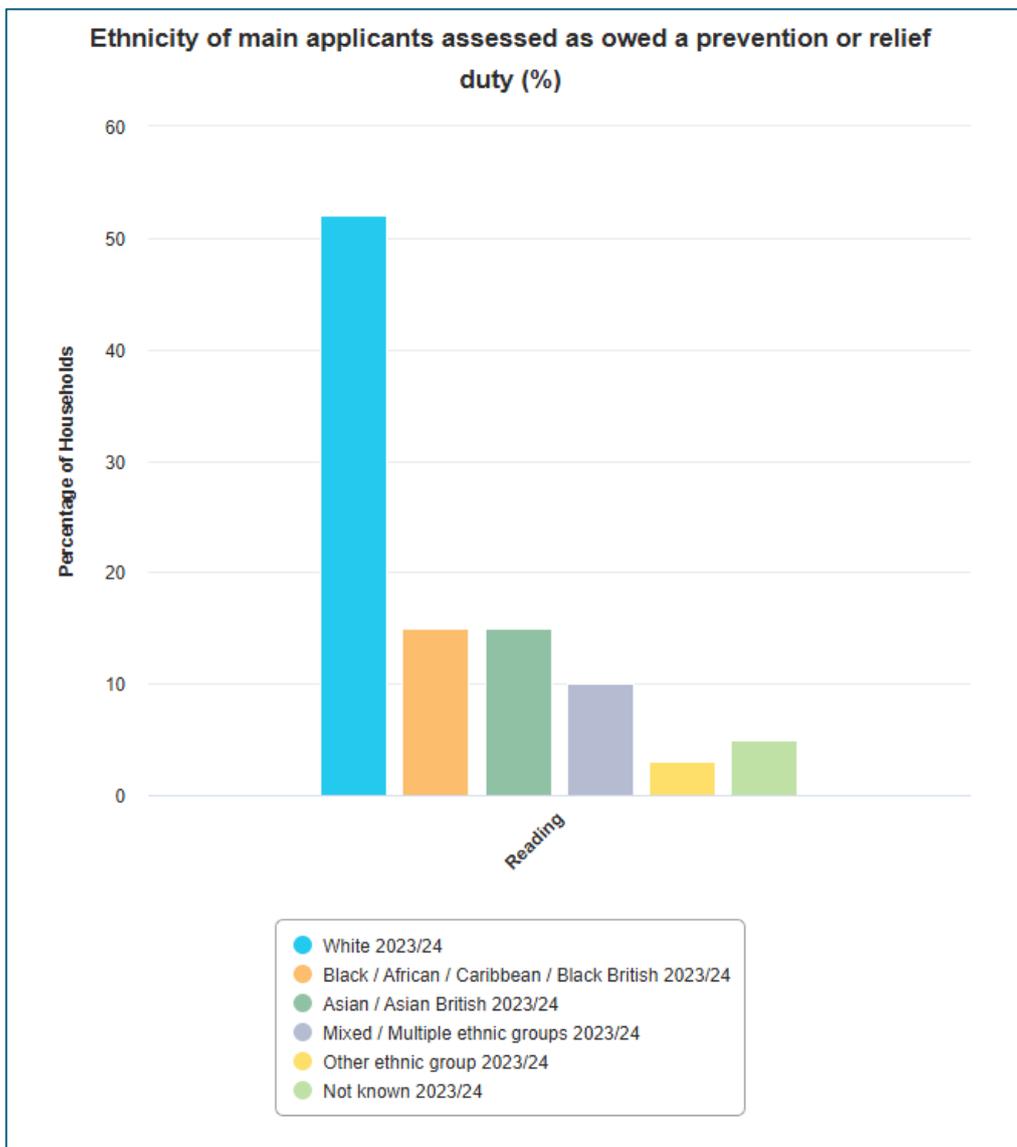
Ethnic group of main applicant

The chart below shows the proportion of main applicants from each household assessed as owed a prevention or relief duty by their ethnic group. In 2023/24, the significant proportion of main applicants assessed for homelessness support in Reading were from ethnic minority backgrounds, with White applicants making up 52%, compared to 67% of Reading's general population (ONS Census 2021). Black, Mixed, and Other ethnic groups were all overrepresented in homelessness assessments compared to their share of the population. For example, Black applicants made up 14% of those assessed in 2023/24 and 17% in 2024/25, while they represent only 7.2% of the population.¹⁶ In 2023/24, those identifying as Asian were significantly underrepresented in terms of duties owed. However, in 2024/25 they are now represented at 16% of duties owed, proportionate to Reading's population data from

¹⁵ Calculated by LG Inform, N/A, **Data updated:** 30 Oct 2024.

¹⁶ Calculated by LG Inform, N/A, **Data updated:** 30 Oct 2024.

the Census 2021. This suggests that ethnic minority groups in Reading may face greater risks of homelessness, possibly due to barriers in accessing housing, economic pressures, or systemic inequalities.



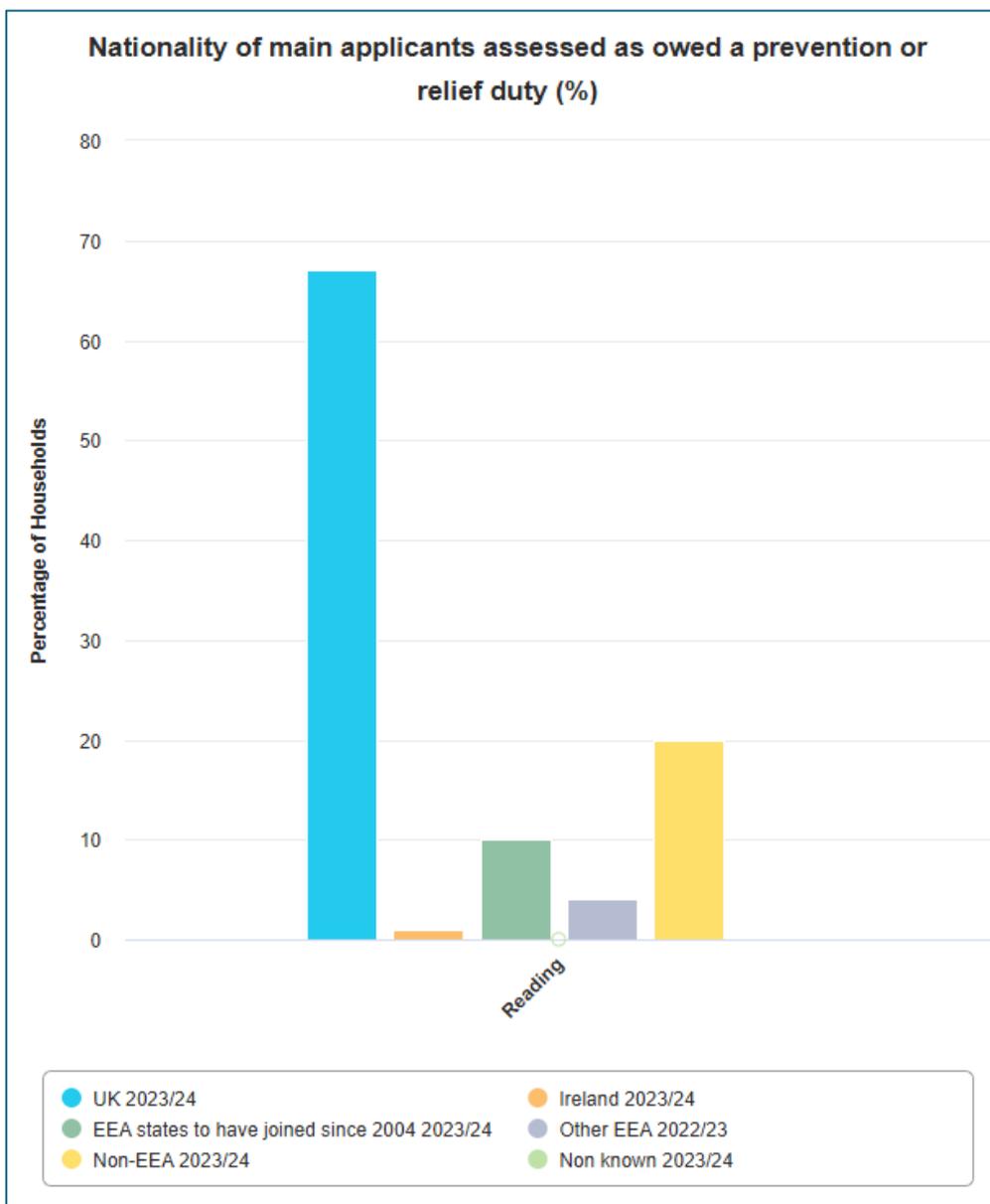
To respond to the overrepresentation of ethnic minority groups in homelessness data, Reading’s strategy should include actions to make services fair, accessible, and inclusive. This could involve working with community groups, improving cultural awareness in frontline services, and checking for any barriers or bias in housing support. Tracking outcomes by ethnicity can help identify gaps and improve support for those most at risk.

Nationality of main applicant

This chart shows the proportion of main applicants from each household assessed as owed a prevention or relief duty by their nationality groupings.

In 2023/24 the highest represented nationality among main applicants in Reading was UK.

The chart below showing the nationality of main applicants assessed as owed a prevention or relief duty in 2023/24 indicates that around 70% were UK nationals, followed by approximately 20% from non-EEA countries. Smaller proportions were recorded for applicants from EEA states that joined since 2004 (around 5%), other EEA countries (about 2%), and those whose nationality was not known (less than 1%). Irish nationals represented the smallest group. When compared to the ONS Census 2021 data for Reading Borough, where 64.2% of residents were born in England and 21.8% identified with a non-UK national identity, the homelessness duty data broadly reflects the local population’s nationality makeup. The presence of non-EEA and EEA nationals in both datasets highlights Reading’s diverse demographic profile.¹⁷



¹⁷ Calculated by LG Inform, N/A, UK, Data updated: 19 Feb 2025.

Reading's strategy should recognise Reading's diverse population and ensure homelessness services are inclusive and accessible to all nationalities. With around 30% of applicants from non-UK backgrounds, the response should include culturally competent support, translated materials, and partnerships with migrant-focused organisations. It should also address barriers such as immigration status or lack of documentation, ensuring equitable access to prevention and relief services.

Support needs of main applicant

Examining data across the ten most prevalent support needs of households owed a prevention or relief duty from 2020/21 to 2024/25 the key findings are that:

- **Mental health problems** consistently rank as the most common support need, peaking at 17% in 2020/21 and 2022/23, and remaining the top issue across all years.
- **Physical ill health and disability** is the second most common support need after mental health. The proportion of individuals owed a duty due to disability has notably increased, rising from 5% to 14% between 2020/21 and 2024/25.
- Other notable support needs include:
 - Substance misuse
 - Domestic abuse
 - Offending history
 - Budgeting difficulties
 - Young people (18–25) needing support to live independently
 - Repeat homelessness
 - Access to education, employment, or training
 - Former asylum seeker status

The data shows a consistent demand for mental health and physical health-related support, indicating the importance of integrated health and housing services, accessible housing, and inclusive support services. Emerging or persistent needs such as domestic abuse, substance misuse, and budgeting difficulties suggest the need for multi-agency collaboration and tailored interventions. The presence of young people and repeat homelessness highlights the importance of early intervention and tenancy sustainment efforts.

Spotlight on members of the armed forces and risk of homelessness

In Reading, veterans are under-identified in homelessness services. Between 2020 and 2025, no individuals owed a homelessness duty were recorded as having served in HM Forces. In 2024/25, just 0.58% of Housing Register applicants identified as veterans – below the national estimate of 3.3%. Two veterans were offered social housing that year, representing 0.53% of total lets. Local data shows no veterans identified in rough sleeping counts between May 2023 and June 2024.

National evidence suggests veterans are twice as likely to sleep rough as the general population, with factors such as PTSD, difficulty adjusting to civilian life, and reluctance to seek help, all contributing to hidden homelessness. However,

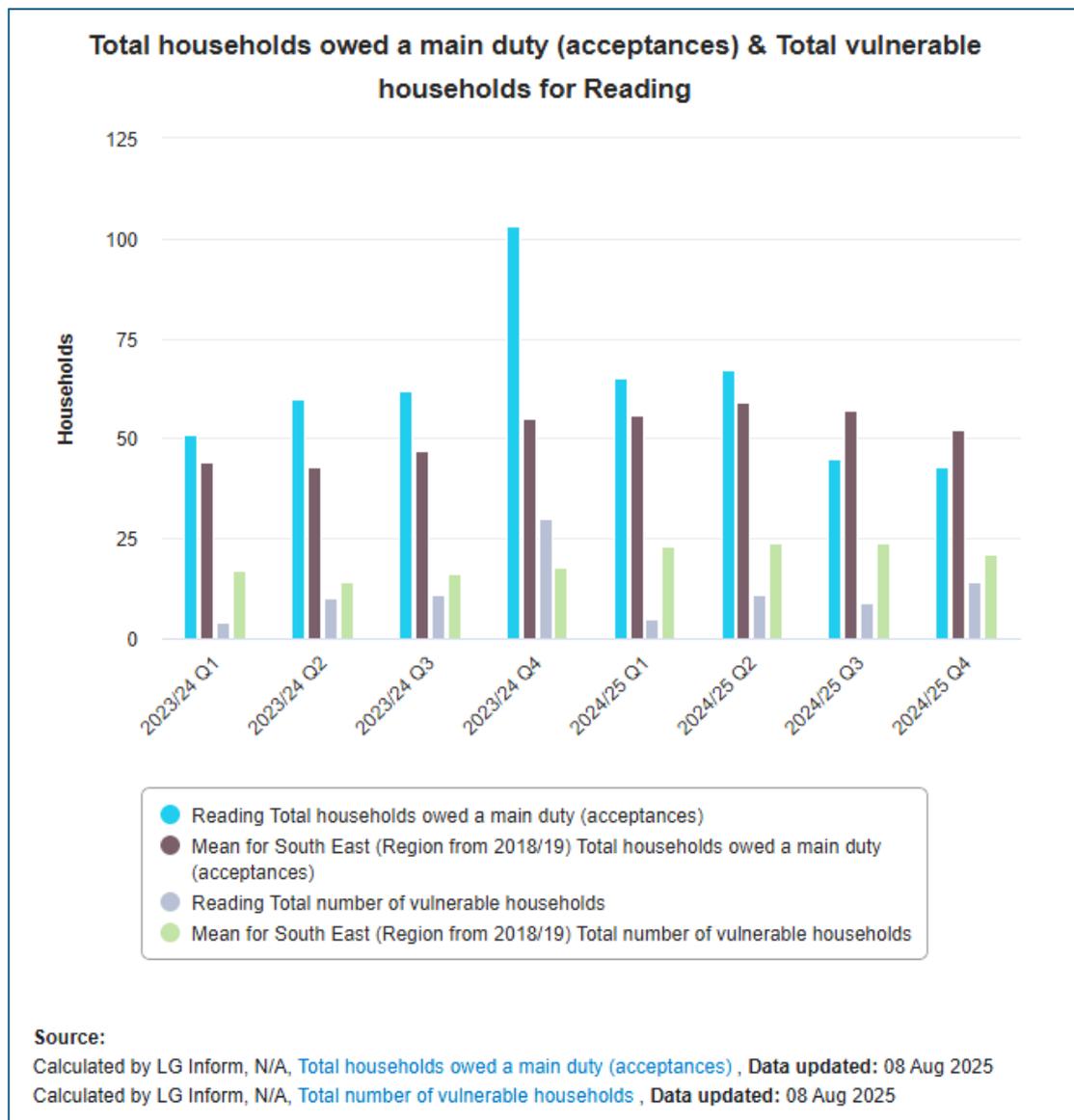
Reading's strategy needs to commit to improving data capture, developing veteran-specific support pathways, and ensuring services are inclusive and accessible to the Armed Forces community. While not raised as a significant issue in consultation, the strategy's action plan should include measures to raise awareness and ensure veterans can access appropriate support when needed.

Households owed a main duty

Households at risk of homelessness within 56 days are entitled to prevention support from the local authority. If they become homeless, the authority must work to relieve it. The main homelessness duty applies when someone is unintentionally homeless, eligible for help, and has priority need – a definition unchanged by the 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act. However, this duty now only applies if earlier prevention or relief efforts were unsuccessful.

In Q4 of 2024/25, 43 households in Reading were accepted as having priority need and owed the main duty, including 14 vulnerable households. The graph below shows quarterly data from 2023/24 Q1 to 2024/25 Q4, comparing Reading with the South East regional average for households owed a main homelessness duty and those identified as vulnerable. Reading consistently reports higher numbers than the regional mean, with a peak of around 100 households accepted under the main duty in Q4 2023/24. Vulnerable households in Reading also rose over time, especially in 2024/25 Q4, though they remain fewer than main duty acceptances.

This trend indicates that Reading is facing greater homelessness pressures, with a consistently high number of households meeting the criteria for the main duty. The rise in vulnerable households may reflect increased identification or growing complexity of needs, reinforcing the importance of targeted support and early intervention strategies.



Priority Need category of households owed a main duty

The largest priority need group owed a main duty in Reading was “Household includes dependent children,” making up 75.76% of all priority needs households in 2023/24 – higher than the national median of approximately 60%. Other categories in Reading include dependent children with additional priority needs (around 10%), pregnancy (about 5%), physical disability or ill health (around 5%), and mental health problems (also around 5%).

Compared to the national figures, Reading has a notably higher proportion of cases involving dependent children and a lower proportion involving physical disability or ill health. Domestic abuse appears as a relatively small category in both Reading and nationally, suggesting it is less frequently recorded as the primary reason for priority need, though it remains a significant factor in some cases. Overall, the data indicates that families with children form the largest group owed a main duty in Reading.¹⁸

¹⁸ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 30 Oct 2024.

Reading's strategy should focus on supporting families with children, who make up the largest group owed a main duty in Reading. It should also ensure accessible services for those with physical or mental health needs and maintain strong pathways to specialist support for those affected by domestic abuse.

Number of households living in temporary accommodation

Temporary accommodation refers to housing provided by the council for homeless households. Most are placed under the main homelessness duty until suitable housing is found.

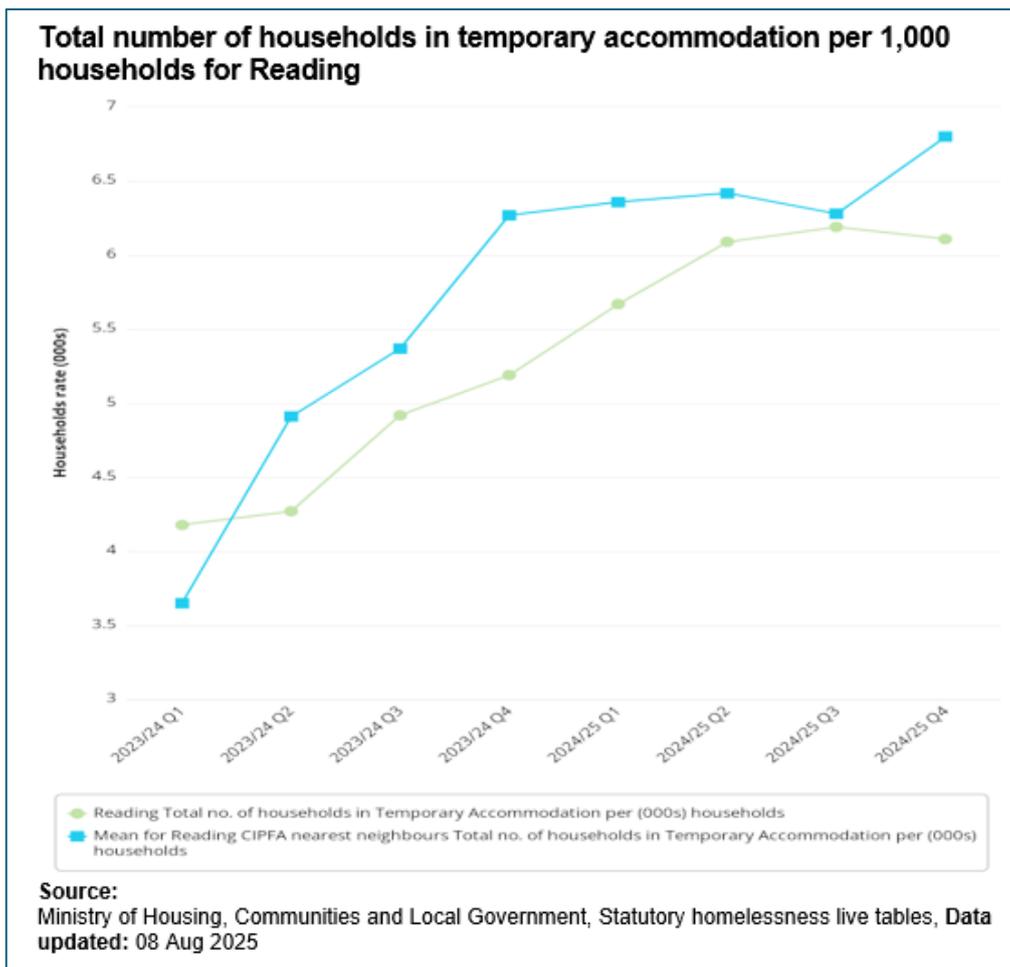
Nationally, temporary accommodation levels have reached record highs, with 123,100 placements and 78,420 families affected, including the highest number of children ever recorded in such housing. A total of 18,380 households are currently placed in Bed & Breakfasts (B&Bs), and 3,770 families have exceeded the statutory six-week limit for placement in temporary accommodation with shared facilities – an increase of 50.2% from the previous year. These figures highlight the growing strain on households and the financial pressures faced by local authorities. Trends over time show a continued rise in temporary accommodation use, despite efforts in prevention and relief.¹⁹

In Q4 2024/25, 402 households were in temporary accommodation in Reading — a rate of 6.11 per 1,000 households, which is higher than the South East average of 3.98, but lower than the ONS statistical nearest neighbour average of 6.80.

The graph below shows how the number of households in temporary accommodation per 1,000 households has changed in Reading compared to its ONS statistical nearest neighbours from Q1 2023/24 to Q4 2024/25. Reading's rate starts lower but rises steadily, reaching around 6.5 per 1,000 households, consistently staying above the average for similar areas.

This suggests that housing pressures in Reading are increasing faster than in comparable local authorities, with more households needing temporary accommodation over time.

¹⁹ MHCLG Webinar, 2025



Given the rising number of households in temporary accommodation, Reading’s homelessness and rough sleeping strategy should focus on preventing homelessness early, supporting vulnerable groups, and increasing supply of housing options. This includes working with landlords to prevent evictions, offering advice and financial help to those at risk, and improving access to affordable housing.

To meet growing demand, the strategy could explore ways to increase temporary accommodation, such as partnering with housing associations, using modular or repurposed buildings, converting unused council properties, or leasing homes from the private sector. It should also ensure placements are suitable, as cost effective as possible and well-managed, while strengthening links with services like mental health, probation, and support for families whilst people are temporarily housed.

Composition of households in temporary accommodation

In Q4 2024/25, the majority of households in temporary accommodation in Reading were single female parents with children (36%) and couples with children (27%), both notably higher than the averages for Reading’s statistical nearest neighbours and the wider South East region. In contrast, single male adults made up just 8% of households in Reading’s

temporary accommodation, compared to 20–23% in similar areas.²⁰ This suggests that single male adults are less likely to be placed in temporary accommodation in Reading.

One likely reason is the presence of well-funded supported accommodation pathways that primarily accommodate single men, such as hostels, supported housing projects, and Housing First. These services are likely contributing to diverting single male adults away from temporary accommodation and into more appropriate, tailored support settings. This approach helps reduce pressure on temporary accommodation and better meets the needs of individuals with complex support requirements, while allowing temporary accommodation to focus more on families and those with dependent children.

Reading's strategy should continue investing in supported accommodation pathways for single adults, particularly men, where these support pathways appear to be successfully diverting this group from temporary accommodation. At the same time, the strategy should strengthen support for families – especially single female parents and couples with children – who make up the majority of households in temporary accommodation. This includes ensuring access to suitable housing, family-focused services, and early intervention to prevent homelessness.

In summary:

Reading's homelessness and rough sleeping strategy should focus on scaling up early intervention, preparing for seasonal pressures, and aligning resources with consistently high demand. It should strengthen inter-agency collaboration, particularly with prisons, hospitals, and rehabilitation services, to improve identification and support for those at risk. Targeted strategies for young people and ethnic minority groups will be important, including culturally competent services, community partnerships, and monitoring outcomes by ethnicity. The strategy must also ensure services are inclusive for non-UK nationals, addressing barriers like proving immigration status. Support for families, especially those with children, should be prioritised, alongside accessible services for those with health needs and survivors of domestic abuse. To meet rising demand, the strategy could expand temporary accommodation through partnerships and innovative housing solutions, while continuing to invest in supported pathways for single adults.

²⁰ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 08 Aug 2025.

Experiences of households owed a prevention duty

If a household is at risk of homelessness within 56 days, the local authority must help prevent it. This includes support to stay in their current home or find somewhere else to live. The prevention duty lasts 56 days and can be extended if needed. Data in the next section is taken from 2023/24 H-CLIC submissions and comparators are ONS statistical nearest neighbours.

Reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a prevention duty

- The **total number of households owed a prevention duty** in Reading (1,032) is substantially higher than both the mean (770) and median (623), indicating **greater overall demand**.²¹
- **Reading consistently reports higher figures** than the mean and median of its statistical nearest neighbours across most categories.
- The **end of assured shorthold tenancy (AST)** is the most common reason for prevention duty in Reading (376 households), significantly above the median (255) and mean (315) of statistical neighbours.
- **Family or friends no longer able to accommodate** is also a major driver (196 households), again above the median (129).
- **Domestic abuse** and **eviction from supported housing** are slightly above the average, while **leaving asylum support accommodation** is notably lower in Reading (6 vs. mean of 43).

Reading faces high demand for homelessness prevention, driven primarily by the loss of private rented tenancies and breakdown of informal living arrangements. While domestic abuse and supported housing evictions are slightly above average, asylum-related cases are relatively rare. The data highlights the need for targeted interventions in the private rented sector, improved tenancy sustainment, and support for households relying on informal accommodation.

²¹ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 30 Oct 2024.

Spotlight on care experience and risk of homelessness

Young people leaving care are disproportionately at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping. Many face the challenges of independent living earlier than their peers and often without the family support networks others rely on. Despite statutory duties under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, care leavers can still fall through the gaps – particularly when transitions are poorly planned or support ends abruptly at age thresholds.

Under the Housing Act 1996, care leavers aged 18–20 are automatically considered to have priority need if homeless. Recent legislation – the Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Victims of Domestic Abuse and Care Leavers) (England) Regulations 2025 – removes local connection requirements for care leavers under 25, improving access to social housing and supporting more stable transitions into adulthood.

In Reading, care leavers made up 2% of those owed a prevention or relief duty in 2024/25, and local rough sleeping data (April 2022 – June 2024) identified six individuals under 25 with care experience. According to the charity Become, care leavers are nine times more likely to be homeless than their non-care-experienced peers. Care-experienced young people are more likely to have experienced trauma, instability, and disrupted education, which can affect their ability to sustain tenancies or engage with employment and training. They may also struggle with mental health, financial insecurity, or a lack of trust in services. Without tailored, trauma-informed support and access to safe, affordable housing, many face cycles of temporary accommodation, hidden homelessness, or rough sleeping.

Reading's strategic response must ensure that housing pathways for care leavers are stable, flexible, and integrated with wraparound support, particularly during key transition points. The accompanying action plan should include specific actions to improve data quality, strengthen joint working, and ensure care-experienced young people are explicitly considered in service design, delivery, and monitoring.

Reason for end of assured shorthold (AST) private rented tenancy for households owed a prevention duty

- The **most common reason** in Reading is **landlords wishing to sell or re-let** (228 households), significantly above the median (148) and mean (196), though still below the maximum (614).
- **Other / not known reasons** also feature prominently in Reading (92), higher than both the mean (58) and median (47).
- **Rent arrears due to budgeting issues** (25) are more common in Reading than the average, suggesting financial vulnerability among tenants.
- **Illegal eviction, tenant complaints, and abandonment** are relatively low in Reading, consistent with ONS statistical nearest neighbour averages.
- **Rent arrears due to benefit changes or employment income reduction** are less frequent in Reading than in comparator areas.²²

²² Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 30 Oct 2024.

Reading's data suggests that landlord-driven tenancy endings are the dominant cause of homelessness risk, followed by unclear or other reasons and financial difficulties. Whilst unclear or other reason may signify some data quality issues, overall, there is a highlighted need for targeted prevention efforts around private rented sector stability, tenant financial support, and landlord engagement.

Reason for end of social rented tenancy for households owed a prevention duty

- **Reading has a higher number of cases** attributed to “**Other reasons / not known**” (20 households) than both the mean (8) and median (7), and even slightly above the maximum (19), suggesting possible gaps in data recording or more varied causes.
- **Rent arrears** are the most common reason in Reading (16), above the mean (12) and median (8), but well below the maximum (51).
- **Breach of tenancy not related to rent arrears** is relatively low in Reading (4), consistent with neighbour averages.²³

This data suggests that rent arrears and unclear or miscellaneous reasons are the leading causes of social tenancy loss in Reading. The high number of “other/not known” cases may indicate a need for improved data capture or more detailed categorisation to better inform prevention strategies.

Reason for eviction from supported housing for household owed a prevention duty

- In **Reading**, the most common reason for eviction is “**Other reasons / not known**” (26 households), which is higher than both the mean (19) and median (12), but below the maximum (90). This may suggest either a broader range of causes or gaps in data recording.
- **Rent arrears** in Reading (10) are **above the mean (5)** and **median (2)**, but well below the maximum (22), indicating financial challenges are a notable factor locally.
- **Breach of tenancy not related to rent arrears** is **lower in Reading (7)** than the mean (17), but slightly above the median (6), suggesting fewer behavioural or rule-based evictions compared to other areas.²⁴

Reading sees a relatively high number of evictions from supported housing due to unclear or miscellaneous reasons and rent arrears, while tenancy breaches are less common than in many neighbouring authorities. This points to a need for improved data clarity and targeted financial support within supported housing settings to prevent evictions for this reason and reduce cyclical rough sleeping.

²³ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 30 Oct 2024.

²⁴ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 30 Oct 2024

Accommodation at time of application for households owed a prevention duty

- **Private rented sector** is the most common accommodation type for applicants in Reading (404 households), higher than the mean (344) and median (281), though well below the maximum (970).
- **Living with family** (200) and **living with friends** (86) are also significant in Reading, both above the median and mean, indicating strong reliance on informal housing arrangements.
- **NASS accommodation** (128) is notably higher in Reading than in comparator areas (mean: 39, median: 28), reflecting a larger asylum-seeking population.
- **Social rented sector** (99) is above average, while **owner-occupiers**, **temporary accommodation**, and **refuge** cases are relatively low but still present.
- **No fixed abode** and **rough sleeping** are recorded as zero in Reading, consistent with most neighbours.²⁵

Reading sees a high number of prevention duty cases from the private rented sector, informal arrangements such as living with family or friends, and NASS accommodation, highlighting the importance of targeted support in these areas. The high figures for those living with family or friends suggest a level of hidden homelessness, where individuals lack secure housing but are not visibly rough sleeping. The social rented sector also contributes significantly, indicating that tenancy sustainment work with Registered Providers is essential. The absence of rough sleeping in this dataset reflects the nature of the prevention duty, which applies before someone becomes street homeless – these individuals are more likely to be captured under relief or from outreach service data and statistical returns.

Spotlight on overcrowding

According to Census 2021 data Reading had an overcrowding rate of 6.2%, meaning that 6.2% of households had fewer bedrooms than required based on the Bedroom Standard. This is slightly higher than the England average of 4.4%. Overcrowding was more prevalent in rented accommodation and among certain ethnic and religious groups.

The higher proportion of larger households in Reading likely contribute to increased overcrowding, especially where Reading has limited housing stock and affordability issues. Likewise, housing affordability pressures will lead to overcrowding and shared living arrangements. ONS Census 2021 data shows that overcrowding was more prevalent in private rented accommodation and among certain ethnic and religious groups, reflecting broader inequalities in housing access and affordability.

Reading's strategy should monitor and address overcrowding as a key indicator of housing stress where there are households requiring a prevention intervention, target interventions to identify overcrowding in high-risk areas and communities and promote access to suitable, affordable housing to reduce overcrowding and its impacts.

²⁵ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 30 Oct 2024.

Household type at time of application for households owed a prevention duty

- **Single adults** dominate the data in Reading, with **443 male** and **357 female** applicants – **well above** the mean and median for both categories. This suggests a high level of housing instability among individuals living alone.
- **Single female parents with dependent children** (115) are also a significant group, closely aligned with the median (114) but below the mean (165).
- **Couples with dependent children** (63) and **couples without children** (29) are lower than the averages, indicating fewer prevention duty cases among partnered households.
- **Three or more adult households** are relatively rare in Reading, especially those without children.
- No cases were recorded under “not known” or “other/gender not known” categories in Reading, suggesting consistent data recording.²⁶

Reading’s prevention duty caseload is heavily weighted toward single adults, particularly those without children, highlighting the need for tailored support for individuals living alone. The presence of single female parents also reinforces the importance of family-focused services. Lower figures for multi-adult and couple households may reflect different housing pressures or support pathways. The high numbers of single adults – especially those living with family or friends – may also indicate hidden homelessness, where individuals lack secure housing but are not visibly rough sleeping. This underscores the importance of early intervention and outreach to those in informal or unstable living arrangements.

Reason for household’s prevention duty ending

- **Securing accommodation for 6+ months** is the most common successful outcome in Reading (72 households), though slightly below the mean (84) and median (92), suggesting room to improve long-term housing solutions.
- **Homelessness after prevention duty** (65 households) is higher in Reading than both the mean (54) and median (50), indicating challenges in preventing homelessness effectively.
- **Contact lost** (37 households) is significantly above the average, pointing to issues with engagement or follow-up during the prevention process.
- **Withdrawals or deceased applicants** (9) and **cases where 56 days elapsed with no further action** (15) are broadly in line with comparator areas.
- No households in Reading refused accommodation, refused to cooperate, or were found ineligible – positive signs of engagement and eligibility clarity.²⁷

The data suggests that while many households in Reading successfully secure accommodation, a relatively high number still become homeless or lose contact during the prevention duty. This highlights the need for stronger engagement strategies, improved follow-up, and more effective housing outcomes to reduce homelessness risk.

²⁶ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 30 Oct 2024.

²⁷ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 08 Aug 2025.

Type of accommodation secured for households at end of prevention duty

- **Total households securing accommodation** in Reading (72) is **below the mean (84) and median (92)**, suggesting potential to improve overall prevention success rates.²⁸
- **Private rented sector** is the most common accommodation outcome in Reading (46 households), **above both the mean (36) and median (33)**, indicating strong reliance on private tenancies for prevention success.
- **Social rented sector** placements (23 households) are **slightly below the mean (28) but above the median (13)**, suggesting moderate access to social housing compared to peers.
- **Staying with family or friends** is notably low in Reading (1 household each), compared to the mean (6 and 2 respectively), which may reflect limited informal housing options or cultural/demographic factors.
- **Owner/occupier** outcomes are absent in Reading (0 households), consistent with the median (0) and low across comparators, indicating this is a rare pathway.
- **Other accommodation types** (1 household) are in line with comparator averages, showing typical use of alternative housing solutions.
- **Not known** outcomes are **zero in Reading**, compared to a mean of 10 and a maximum of 62, highlighting **excellent data quality and recording practices**.

Reading shows strong performance in securing private rented accommodation and maintaining high data quality, but overall prevention success is slightly below average. The low number of prevention duties which are resolved by staying with or returning to a family household and social tenancies may indicate areas for strategic focus. Enhancing access to social housing and encouraging community-based solutions, for housing and tenancy sustainment, from our VCFS partners could help boost outcomes and reduce homelessness risk.

Main prevention activity that resulted in accommodation secured for households at end of prevention duty

- **Accommodation secured or organisation delivering housing options service** was the most common prevention activity in Reading (104 households), **above the median (96)**, showing strong direct intervention by housing services.
- **Help securing accommodation found by applicant** was evenly split between **with financial payment (52)** and **without financial payment (53)**—both significantly **above the medians (22 and 43)**, indicating proactive support for self-sourcing accommodation.
- **Supported housing provided** (26 households) is **more than double the median (12)**, suggesting good access to supported housing options in Reading.

²⁸ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 08 Aug 2025.

- **Negotiation/mediation to return to family or friends** (19 households) and **to prevent eviction/repossession** (33 households) are **well above the medians (6 and 18)**, reflecting strong use of advocacy and mediation strategies.
- **Discretionary Housing Payments** (1 household) are in line with the median (1), showing typical use of this financial tool.
- **Other financial payments** (14 households) are **well above the median (4)**, suggesting additional financial support is being used effectively to prevent homelessness.
- **Other activities** (34 households) and **advice/information only** (31 households) are **above the medians (21 and 16)**, indicating a broad range of interventions and good engagement with advice services.²⁹

Reading demonstrates a diverse and proactive approach to homelessness prevention, with high levels of direct housing support, financial assistance, and mediation. The data suggests strong service delivery and engagement, particularly in helping applicants secure their own accommodation and accessing supported housing. Continued investment in these varied strategies appears to be yielding positive outcomes in securing accommodation and preventing homelessness.

Destination of households with alternative accommodation secured at end of prevention duty

- **Most households remained within Reading** after securing alternative accommodation (205 households), which is **well above the median (157)**, indicating strong local rehousing capacity and retention.³⁰

Reading successfully secures alternative accommodation for most households within its own local authority area, demonstrating strong local housing solutions. The data suggests a balanced approach between retaining households locally and using regional/national options when necessary.

Household type of households with accommodation secured at end of prevention duty

- **Total households with accommodation secured** in Reading (367) is **above the mean (317) and median (246)**, showing overall strong performance in securing accommodation.³¹
- **Single adult households** dominate the accommodation outcomes in Reading, with **168 male** and **123 female** households – **well above the mean (105 and 63) and median (85 and 47)**, indicating a high prevalence of single adult homelessness in the area.
- **Female single parents with dependent children** (39 households) are **below the mean (72) and median (49)**, suggesting fewer successful prevention outcomes for this group compared to peers.

²⁹ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 30 Oct 2024.

³⁰ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 30 Oct 2024.

³¹ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 30 Oct 2024.

- **Male single parents** (3 households) are also **below the mean (5)** and **median (5)**, indicating limited success or lower representation.
- **Couples with dependent children** (20 households) and **without dependent children** (8 households) are **below the mean (42 and 17)** and **median (25 and 13)**, suggesting fewer successful outcomes for multi-adult households.
- **Households with three or more adults** (5 with children, 1 without) are **in line or below** comparator medians, indicating these household types are less common or harder to accommodate.
- **No unknown household types recorded**, which reflects **strong data quality**.

Reading secures accommodation for a high number of single adult households, particularly males, which may reflect targeted prevention strategies and availability of supported housing options. However, outcomes for families and couples are below comparator averages, suggesting potential gaps in support or housing availability for these groups. The overall total is strong, and data quality appears good, but there may be opportunities to improve outcomes for single parents and multi-adult households.

Summary of household experiences of the Council's response to their prevention duties

Reading Borough Council faces high demand for homelessness prevention, driven mainly by the loss of private rented tenancies and breakdowns in informal living arrangements. Most households supported are single adults, especially males, with some successful outcomes for families and couples. While many secure accommodation – often in the private rented sector – some still become homeless or lose contact during the process. Data shows financial difficulties and unclear tenancy endings are common, highlighting the need for better data capture, stronger landlord engagement, and targeted financial support. To respond effectively, Reading's strategy should focus on stabilising private tenancies, improving support for hidden homelessness, improving social tenancy sustainment for those with a Registered Provider landlord, and tailoring services to single adults and vulnerable families.

Experiences of households owed a relief duty

If a household is legally homeless and needs help finding settled housing, the council must provide a relief duty. This lasts up to 56 days, unless extended – but only if the household is not eligible for the main homelessness duty. Data in the next section is taken from 2023/24 H-CLIC submissions and comparators are ONS statistical nearest neighbours.

Reason for loss of last settled home for households owed a relief duty

- **Total relief duty cases** in Reading (560) are **below both the mean (1,259) and median (628)**, suggesting lower overall relief demand compared to peers.³²
- **End of AST private rented tenancy** is the most common reason for relief duty in Reading (120 households), closely aligned with the **median (118)** but **below the mean (179)**, showing consistent pressure from the private rented sector.
- **Family or friends no longer able to accommodate** (99 households) is **well below the mean (373) and median (196)**, but still a significant contributor, indicating hidden homelessness.
- **Domestic abuse** (90 households) is **slightly below the mean (177) and median (110)** but remains a key driver of homelessness.
- **Other reasons/not known** (130 households) is **well above the median (27) and mean (72)**, suggesting potential issues with data clarity or categorisation.
- **Evictions from supported housing** (26) and **leaving institutions** (23) are **below comparator averages**, but still notable.
- **Leaving asylum support accommodation** is **very low in Reading** (3 households vs. mean of 118), indicating fewer asylum-related cases.

Reading's relief duty caseload is driven mainly by private rented tenancy endings and breakdowns in informal arrangements, with domestic abuse also a key factor. The high number of "other/not known" cases points to a need for better data capture. While overall relief demand is lower than in comparator areas, the data highlights the importance of targeted support for renters, hidden homelessness, and improved recording practices to inform future strategy.

³² Calculated by LG Inform, **Data updated:** 30 Oct 2024.

Spotlight on Domestic Abuse and homelessness

Domestic abuse is a leading cause of homelessness, particularly among women and families. Survivors often face the urgent need to flee their homes to escape violence or coercive control, frequently with nowhere safe to go. This can result in both visible homelessness and hidden forms, such as sofa surfing or staying in unsafe temporary accommodation. The trauma of abuse, combined with barriers like financial dependence, lack of affordable housing, and limited access to specialist support, can make it extremely difficult for survivors to secure stable housing. Survivors from marginalised communities – such as those with insecure immigration status, disabilities, or language barriers – often face additional challenges in accessing support.

Reading's strategic response must prioritise trauma-informed, culturally competent, and gender-sensitive approaches, ensuring that safe and sustainable housing options are available. By addressing domestic abuse as a root cause of homelessness, we can better protect vulnerable residents and break the cycle of housing insecurity. We must link with the Domestic Abuse and Accommodation Strategy 2023 – 26.

Reason for end of assured shorthold (AST) private rented tenancy for households owed a relief duty

- **Total relief duty cases due to AST tenancy ending** (120 households) are **close to the median (118)**, suggesting typical levels of demand from this group.³³
- The **most common reason** for AST tenancy ending in Reading is **landlords wishing to sell or re-let** (44 households), **above the median (33) but below the mean (68)**, showing landlord decisions are a key driver of homelessness.
- **Other reasons/not known** (38 households) are **above the median (26)**, suggesting potential gaps in data clarity or categorisation.
- **Rent arrears due to budgeting issues** (12 households) and **changes in personal circumstances** (11 households) are **in line with comparator averages**, indicating financial vulnerability is a consistent factor.
- **Illegal evictions and breaches of tenancy** (4 households each) are slightly below average but still present.
- **Tenant abandonment** (6 households) is lower than the mean (17), and **complaints about disrepair** are not reported at all in Reading.

Reading's relief duty cases from AST tenancy endings are mainly driven by landlord decisions and financial challenges, with a notable number of cases recorded under unclear reasons. This highlights the need for better data capture, continued landlord engagement, and targeted financial support to prevent homelessness among private renters.

³³ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 30 Oct 2024.

Reason for end of social rented tenancy for households owed a relief duty

- **Rent arrears are the most common** reason for social tenancy loss in Reading (7 households), in line with the mean (7) and above the median (5), indicating financial pressures are a consistent issue.
- **Breach of tenancy (non-rent related) is lower in Reading** (2 households) than both the mean (7) and median (6), suggesting fewer behavioural or compliance-related tenancy failures.
- **Other reasons/not known** (8 households) are below the mean (12) but above the median (6), pointing to some gaps in data clarity or categorisation.³⁴

Social tenancy loss in Reading is mainly driven by rent arrears, with fewer cases linked to tenancy breaches. The presence of “other/not known” reasons suggest a need for better data recording to inform targeted prevention strategies. Strengthening financial support and tenancy sustainment efforts with social landlords could help reduce these cases.

Reason for eviction from supported housing for those owed a relief duty

- **Rent arrears** (9 households) are the **most common reason** for eviction from supported housing in Reading, **slightly above the mean (7) and median (7)**, indicating financial pressures are a key issue.
- **Breach of tenancy/licence (non-rent related) is much lower in Reading (6 households)** than both the **mean (55) and median (49)**, suggesting fewer behavioural or compliance-related evictions compared to peers.
- **Other reasons/not known** (11 households) are **well below the mean (30) and median (21)**, but still notable, pointing to some gaps in data clarity or categorisation.³⁵

Evictions from supported housing in Reading are mainly due to rent arrears, with relatively few cases linked to tenancy breaches. The lower figures for “other/not known” reasons suggest better data recording than many peers, though further clarity could still improve prevention efforts. The data highlights the need for targeted financial support within supported housing settings to reduce eviction risk – there should be a more stringent focus in provider specifications, KPIs and performance monitoring on this, as well as in-reach attempts from homelessness prevention teams to improve early intervention and engagement regarding arrears.

Accommodation at time of application for households owed a relief duty

- **No fixed abode (99 households) and rough sleeping (69 households)** are major accommodation types at the point of relief duty application in Reading, showing high levels of housing instability and visible homelessness.
- **Living with family (80 households) and friends (58 households)** are also common, indicating significant **hidden homelessness** and reliance on informal arrangements.

³⁴ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 30 Oct 2024.

³⁵ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 30 Oct 2024.

- **Private rented sector (73 households)** is a notable source, though **below the median (142) and mean (170)**, suggesting fewer relief cases from this sector than in comparator areas.
- **NASS accommodation (73 households)** and **refuge placements (26 households)** are relatively high, pointing to specific needs among asylum seekers and survivors of domestic abuse.
- **Social rented sector (23 households)** and **temporary accommodation (8 households)** are lower than comparator averages, possibly reflecting limited availability or different referral pathways.
- **Departure from institutions (39 households)** is below the mean (84) but still significant, highlighting the need for better transition planning.³⁶

Reading's relief duty caseload reflects a mix of visible and hidden homelessness, with many applicants coming from unstable or informal living arrangements. Fewer cases originate from the private rented sector than in other, comparable areas, indicating Reading's effectiveness in preventing homelessness where applicants are losing private sector accommodation. There is a notable presence of asylum seekers, people sleeping rough, and those leaving institutions. The data highlights the need for early intervention, targeted outreach, and specialist support for vulnerable groups, particularly those without secure housing or relying on informal accommodation.

³⁶ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 30 Oct 2024.

Spotlight on homelessness from institutional settings

In 2023–24, homelessness stemming from institutional settings remained a significant issue in the East of England, South East, and South West. Key sources included individuals leaving Home Office accommodation (3,330), custody (2,740), hospital care (610), and the care system (450). While many areas have effective partnerships in place, improvements are needed in early referrals, information sharing, and coordinated support. Institutional homelessness is also vulnerable to sudden spikes, particularly due to asylum and resettlement backlogs, early prison releases, and seasonal hospital discharge pressures.

Departure from institutions as the reason for people approaching the Council at prevention and relief stages of homelessness duty, are low – and national statistics, rough sleeping figures and applications to supported accommodation for people with offending histories, suggest this is not representative of demand in Reading.

Leaving institutions is often underrepresented in homelessness data because individuals frequently apply for support after leaving, meaning their accommodation is recorded as something else – such as "no fixed abode" or "staying with friends or family." Data systems like H-CLIC typically capture the current accommodation at the time of application, rather than the housing history, which can make it harder to identify recent institutional discharge as a contributing factor. This is especially common when people stay temporarily with others, making their homelessness less visible.

In many cases, opportunities for early intervention may be missed due to challenges in coordination between institutions and housing services, or because individuals do not seek help until they are already at risk. Prevention duties ideally begin before someone exits an institution, but this depends on timely referrals and awareness of available support.

Reading's strategic response must strengthen early intervention and coordination to prevent homelessness linked to institutional discharge. Improved referral pathways, consistent data recording, and multi-agency working are key to identifying and supporting individuals before they leave institutions. The strategy's action plan should reflect the need for services to be flexible in responding to sudden pressures, such as asylum backlogs, early prison releases, and seasonal hospital discharges.

Household type at time of application for households owed a relief duty

- **Single adult households dominate relief duty applications** in Reading, with 286 male and 167 female applicants – above the median (386 and 130) but below the mean (648 and 238), reflecting a high level of individual homelessness.
- **Single parents with dependent children**, especially households headed by females (63), are **well below the mean (183) and median (117)**, suggesting fewer family-based applications.

- Couples and multi-adult households are significantly lower than comparator averages, indicating different housing pressures or support pathways.³⁷

Relief duty in Reading is primarily driven by single adults, especially males, with fewer families and couples presenting for support. This points to a need for tailored services for individuals, while also exploring ways to better engage and support family and multi-adult households who may be underrepresented in applications.

Reason for households' relief duty ending

- **Securing accommodation for 6+ months** is the most common successful outcome in Reading (66 households), **matching the median but below the mean (82)**, suggesting room to improve long-term housing solutions.
- **56 days elapsed without resolution** (62 households) is **well below the mean (195) and median (122)**, which may reflect quicker case closure or fewer unresolved cases.
- **Contact lost** (32 households) is **slightly above the median (31)**, indicating challenges with maintaining engagement during the relief duty.
- **Refusals and withdrawals** (3 refused accommodation, 7 withdrew or deceased) are **in line with comparator averages**, showing typical levels of disengagement or case closure.
- **Very few cases** involved **referrals to other local authorities (1) or ineligibility (2)**, and **no cases** were recorded as **intentional homelessness** or **refusal to cooperate**, suggesting good eligibility screening and engagement.
- **Total relief duty cases ended** in Reading (173 households) is **below both the mean (333) and median (225)**, indicating lower overall relief duty activity compared to peers.³⁸

Reading shows solid performance in securing accommodation and resolving relief duty cases efficiently but still faces challenges with contact loss and slightly lower overall success rates. The data suggests a need for stronger engagement strategies, follow-up support, and continued focus on long-term housing outcomes to reduce homelessness risk.

Type of accommodation secured for households at end of relief duty

- **Private rented sector** is the most common accommodation outcome for households whose relief duty ended in Reading (34 households), **above both the mean (27) and median (21)**, showing strong reliance on private tenancies.
- **Social rented sector** placements (23 households) are **below the mean (40) but in line with the median (24)**, indicating moderate access to social housing.
- **Informal arrangements** like **staying with family (0) and friends (2)** are **very low**, suggesting limited use of informal housing solutions.

³⁷ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 30 Oct 2024.

³⁸ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 08 Aug 2025.

- **Other accommodation types** (5 households) are slightly above the median (2), showing some diversity in housing outcomes.
- **No households** secured owner-occupied housing, which is consistent with comparator areas.
- **Total households securing accommodation** (66) is **equal to the median** but **below the mean (82)**, suggesting average performance in securing housing under the relief duty.³⁹

Reading performs well in securing private rented accommodation for households under the relief duty, with moderate success in accessing social housing. The low use of informal arrangements and below-average total outcomes suggest opportunities to expand housing options and improve overall success rates. Continued focus on private sector engagement and social tenancy access will be key to strengthening relief duty outcomes.

Main relief activity that resulted in accommodation secured for households at end of relief duty

- **Accommodation secured or delivered by the housing needs service** is the most common relief activity in Reading (70 households), though **below the median (128)**.
- **Help securing accommodation found by the applicant** is split between **with financial payment (30 households)** and **without financial payment (26 households)**—both **above the median (19)**, indicating strong support for self-sourcing housing.
- **Supported housing provision** (49 households) is **above the median (45)**, showing good access to specialist accommodation.
- **Accommodation secured by other activity** (27 households) and **no activity (7 households)** are **in line with comparator medians**, reflecting typical levels of alternative or minimal intervention.⁴⁰

Reading demonstrates a balanced and proactive approach to relief duty, with strong support for applicants securing their own accommodation and good access to supported housing.

Destination of households with alternative accommodation secured at end of relief duty

- **Most households (174)** who secured alternative accommodation under the relief duty in Reading remained **within the same local authority**, which is **slightly below the median (199)**, but still shows strong local rehousing capacity.
- **Placements in another local authority within the same region (11)** and **in another region (16)** are **above the medians (8 and 4)**.
- **Destination not known** (8 households) is **below the median (11)**, indicating relatively good data recording.⁴¹

³⁹ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 08 Aug 2025.

⁴⁰ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 30 Oct 2024.

⁴¹ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 30 Oct 2024.

Reading successfully rehoused most households locally under the relief duty. The data suggests a need to balance local capacity with support for out-of-area moves, ensuring continuity of care and housing stability.

Household type of households with accommodation secured at end of relief duty

- **Single adult households** dominate relief duty outcomes in Reading, with **106 male** and **55 female** households securing accommodation – **close to the median (109 and 36)** and **below the mean (168 and 62)**, reflecting a strong focus on individual homelessness.
- **Single female parents** (34 households) are **above the median (22)** but **below the mean (40)**, showing moderate success in supporting family households.
- **Couples and multi-adult households** (6 or fewer households each) are **well below comparator averages**, suggesting limited accommodation outcomes for these groups.
- **Total households securing accommodation** (209) is **equal to the median (176)** but **below the mean (312)**, indicating average performance in relief duty outcomes.⁴²

Relief duty outcomes in Reading are primarily driven by single adults, with moderate success for single parents and limited outcomes for couples and multi-adult households. The data suggests a need to strengthen support for families and shared households, while continuing to tailor services for individuals at risk of homelessness.

Summary of household experiences of the Council's response to their relief duties

Reading's relief duty caseload is shaped by private rented tenancy endings, informal arrangement breakdowns, and domestic abuse, with many applicants being single adults. While accommodation is often secured in the private sector, overall success rates are slightly below average, and contact loss remains a challenge. Evictions from social and supported housing are mainly due to rent arrears, and a high number of cases are recorded under unclear reasons, highlighting the need for better data capture. To strengthen its strategy, Reading should focus on landlord engagement, financial support, tailored services for individuals and families, and improved data quality to inform targeted interventions.

⁴² Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 30 Oct 2024.

Experiences of households owed a main duty

Outcome of main duty decisions for eligible households

- **43 households** in Reading were found to be **homeless, in priority need, and unintentionally homeless**, meaning they were accepted for the **main homelessness duty** – this is **below the mean (124) and median (77)**, but still a significant group.
- **Intentional homelessness cases** (10 households) are **above the mean (6) and median (3)**, suggesting more households in Reading are losing accommodation due to actions deemed within their control.
- **Households without priority need** (10) are **well below the mean (53) and median (36)**, indicating fewer applicants fall outside the priority need criteria.
- **No households were found not to be homeless**, which aligns with the median (0), showing accurate initial assessments.⁴³

Reading accepts a moderate number of households for the main homelessness duty, with a higher-than-average rate of intentional homelessness decisions, which may reflect stricter assessments or specific local challenges. The low number of non-priority cases suggests most applicants meet the threshold for support. This highlights the need for early intervention, tenancy sustainment, and targeted support to reduce intentional homelessness outcomes.

Number of households owed a main duty by priority need

- The **majority of households owed a main duty in Reading** include **dependent children (27 households)**, though this is **below both the mean (62) and median (34)**, suggesting fewer family-based cases compared to peers.
- **Mental health vulnerability** (7 households) and **physical disability/ill health** (4 households) are the most common non-family priority needs, though both are **below comparator averages**, indicating moderate representation of health-related vulnerabilities.
- **Domestic abuse, young applicants**, and **other reasons** each account for **1 household**, showing limited but present diversity in priority need categories.
- **No households** were owed a main duty due to **pregnancy, old age, or emergency homelessness**, which may reflect local demographics or referral patterns.
- **Total households owed a main duty** in Reading (43) is **well below the mean (124) and median (77)**, indicating lower overall demand or stricter eligibility outcomes.⁴⁴

Reading's main duty caseload is primarily made up of families with children, with smaller numbers of households presenting with health-related vulnerabilities or domestic abuse. The overall number is lower than comparator areas, suggesting either fewer eligible cases or effective prevention earlier in the homelessness pathway. The data highlights the need for continued support for families, alongside tailored services for individuals with complex needs.

⁴³ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 08 Aug 2025.

⁴⁴ Calculated by LG Inform, Data updated: 08 Aug 2025.

Number of households whose main duty ended by reason for duty end

- **Most households in Reading (35)** ended their main duty by **accepting a social housing offer**, which is **below the mean (63)** and **median (47)**, but still the dominant outcome.
- **Private rented sector offers accepted** (6 households) are **slightly below the median (7)**, showing limited use of this pathway.
- **No households refused offers** of social or private rented housing.
- **Voluntary departures (7 households)** and **refusals or lost contact (2 households)** are **in line with or below** comparator medians, indicating relatively low disengagement.
- **Intentional homelessness from temporary accommodation** (1 household) is **below the median (2)**, showing few cases of tenancy breakdown in temporary settings.
- **Total households no longer owed a main duty** in Reading (51) is **below both the mean (102)** and **median (75)**, reflecting lower overall throughput or demand.

Reading's main duty outcomes are largely driven by social housing placements improved by ringfencing 50% of property vacancies on the housing register for homeless households to bid on. There is minimal disengagement, indicating effective offer matching and applicant co-operation. The data suggests a need to increase access to housing options, particularly in the private rented sector, and maintain strong engagement to support successful exits from homelessness.

Summary of household experiences of the Council's response to their main duty owed

Reading accepts a moderate number of households under the main homelessness duty, mostly families with children, with few non-priority cases – indicating that applicants generally meet support thresholds. A higher-than-average rate of intentional homelessness decisions suggests a need for early intervention and tenancy sustainment. Outcomes are largely driven by social housing placements, with low refusal and disengagement rates, showing effective offer matching and strong engagement. Reading's strategy should expand private rented sector access, maintain tailored support for vulnerable groups, and continue focusing on prevention and family support.

Rough Sleeping in Reading

Rough sleeping data sets

National data on rough sleeping in England is collected and published through three main sources, each offering different insights into its scale, nature, and trends. Together, these datasets help build a picture of rough sleeping across England, regions, and local authority areas. Below is a summary of the national and local data sources that inform our understanding of people sleeping rough in Reading:

Annual rough sleeping snapshot figure

Each year all local authorities in England count or estimate the number of people sleeping rough on a single 'typical' night between 1st October and 30th November. For the purposes of the snapshot, rough sleeping is defined as individuals who are sleeping or about to bed down in open-air locations such as streets, parks, doorways, and bus shelters, or in places not designed for habitation like tents, makeshift shelters, cars, and derelict buildings. The snapshot does not include people in hostels, shelters, campsites, squats, organised protests, or traveller sites. Local authorities choose the date and use one of three methods – a count-based estimate, an evidence-based estimate, or an evidence-based estimate with a spotlight count. It is considered best practice to involve outreach teams, local charities, and community groups working with people sleeping rough to determine the final number.

Figures are verified independently by an organisation called Homeless Link and are published in the February of the next year. The purpose of the figure is to provide a consistent year-on-year measure of rough sleeping across England. While it enables us to set a benchmark and show comparators over time, there are limitations to this data. It captures those people seen or believed to be sleeping rough on a specific night but excludes hidden homelessness and people in hostels or temporary accommodation who meet the broader definition of homelessness and may be intermittently sleeping rough.

Rough Sleeping Data Framework

This is monthly data and management information collected by the MHCLG from all local authorities in England via a system called DELTA. It intends to provide more frequent and detailed comparative data to understand the flow of people onto and off the streets, and to monitor prevention and accommodation efforts – especially the effectiveness of those interventions funded by MHCLG issued grants. This data framework better captures seasonal and dynamic patterns of rough sleeping, including those who may not be visible on a single night, and those who are intermittently rough sleeping.

Office for National Statistics (ONS) Reports

The ONS provides UK-wide analysis via aggregate data from local authorities and provides broader insights into trends and characteristics of rough sleeping, compared to wider population data.

Data collected from Reading's Rough Sleeping Outreach Service

Information is systematically collected and analysed following each street shift conducted by Reading's local rough sleeping outreach team. These 'Street Shift Diaries' capture records of individuals actively engaged on the streets by the team and form the basis of Reading's

monthly submissions to the Rough Sleeping Data Framework. They also feed into Power BI dashboards designed to monitor hotspot areas, encampments, and evolving trends in demographics and locations over time.

Additional insights are gathered through Reading's multi-agency Access Panel – a weekly forum for reviewing new referrals into supported housing and prioritising available vacancies – as well as through quarterly key performance indicator (KPI) submissions from the outreach service. These sources provide valuable data on outcomes such as successful accommodation placements and reconnection efforts.

National overview of rough sleeping trends

Nationally, rough sleeping continues to rise despite ongoing Government investment in support and accommodation. In September 2024, 3,667 people were recorded as sleeping rough, with 34% experiencing long-term homelessness, 33% newly homeless, 14% returning (30% of whom had previously been in settled accommodation), and 8% recently discharged from institutions. Most individuals were seen rough sleeping for short periods, with 28% seen only once and 23% seen over ten nights. Accommodation outcomes remained largely unchanged from June to September 2024, with around 3,500 people not accommodated each month and only 400–500 moving into accommodation, highlighting ongoing gaps in suitable accommodation and support provisions.⁴⁵ The national data highlights the need to reduce demand, better support those with complex needs, and create sustainable pathways to prevent repeat homelessness.

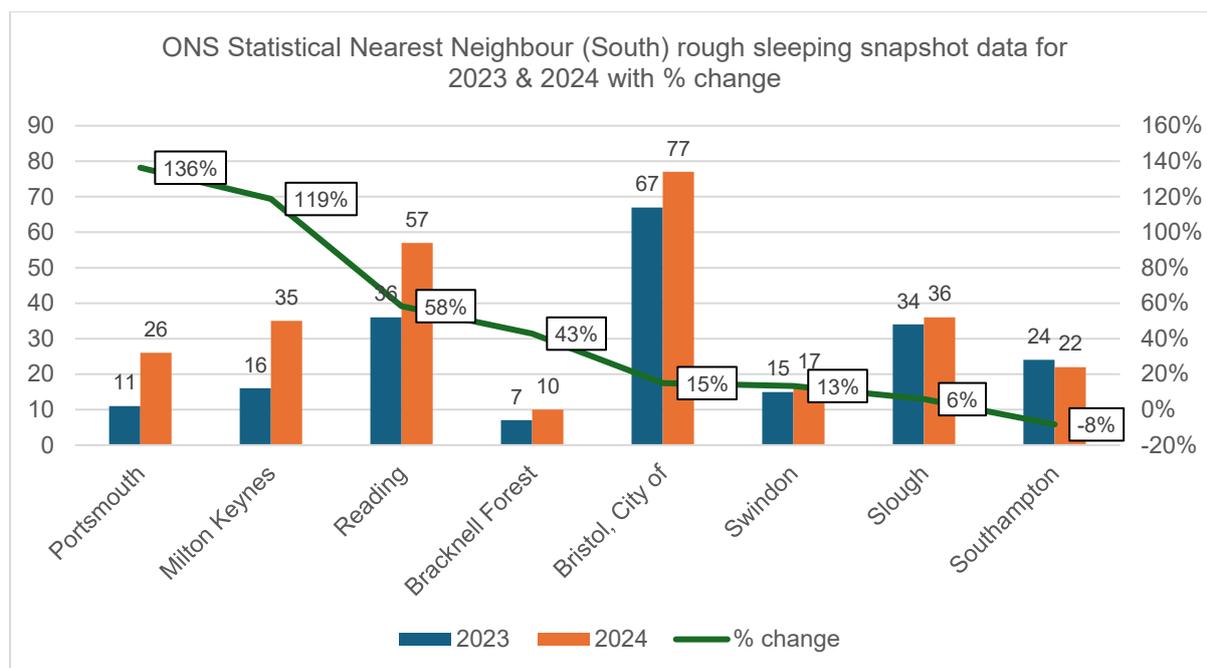
Annual rough sleeping snapshot – what the data tells us

In 2024, an estimated 4,320 people were sleeping rough across England on a typical night, marking a 28% increase (933 more people) compared to 2023. In the South East region, 764 individuals were recorded as sleeping rough, representing a 38% rise (an additional 211 people) from the previous year.

In 2024, Reading's official and declared snapshot night figure was 57 individuals. For the six months prior to the 2024 snapshot night, Reading's monthly rough sleeping average was 42 people – denoting a 17% increase and a more typical reflection of local need. The official snapshot figure was inflated due to SWEP being active, but delaying either SWEP or the count risked breaching the 'typical night' criteria or deaths on the streets due to cold weather. The decision to activate SWEP and submit a higher annual figure followed good practice and saved lives, with the Council confident that the decision was appropriate. Regardless, the figures align with the national upward trend in rough sleeping.

Among our ONS statistical nearest neighbour comparator local authorities, Reading had the second highest rough sleeping snapshot figure in both 2023 and 2024. However, two other authorities saw significantly larger percentage increases this year, reflecting the wider national trend of rising rough sleeping.

⁴⁵ MHCLG webinar, 2025.



The 2024 rough sleeping snapshot highlighted some key themes:

- **Barriers to accessing accommodation from the streets due to immigration status and local connection**

Only 44% of people sleeping rough had both a local connection to Reading and access to public funds; 37% had unresolved or unknown immigration status, preventing access to housing or income and 19% had no local connection to Reading and were not engaging with reconnection efforts.

This means over half of people sleeping rough in Reading are outside the scope of either statutory or local housing support due to legal or local connection barriers. This leaves individuals at high risk of long-term rough sleeping if there are not non-statutory, flexible, and innovative interventions.

- **Environmental and behavioural factors contributing to sustained rough sleeping in Reading**

Rough sleeping in car parks and encampments can become hotspots for anti-social behaviour – which in turn reinforces patterns of rough sleeping. Begging activity often sustains substance misuse and can reduce individuals’ willingness or ability to engage with support services, making it harder to break the cycle of street homelessness.

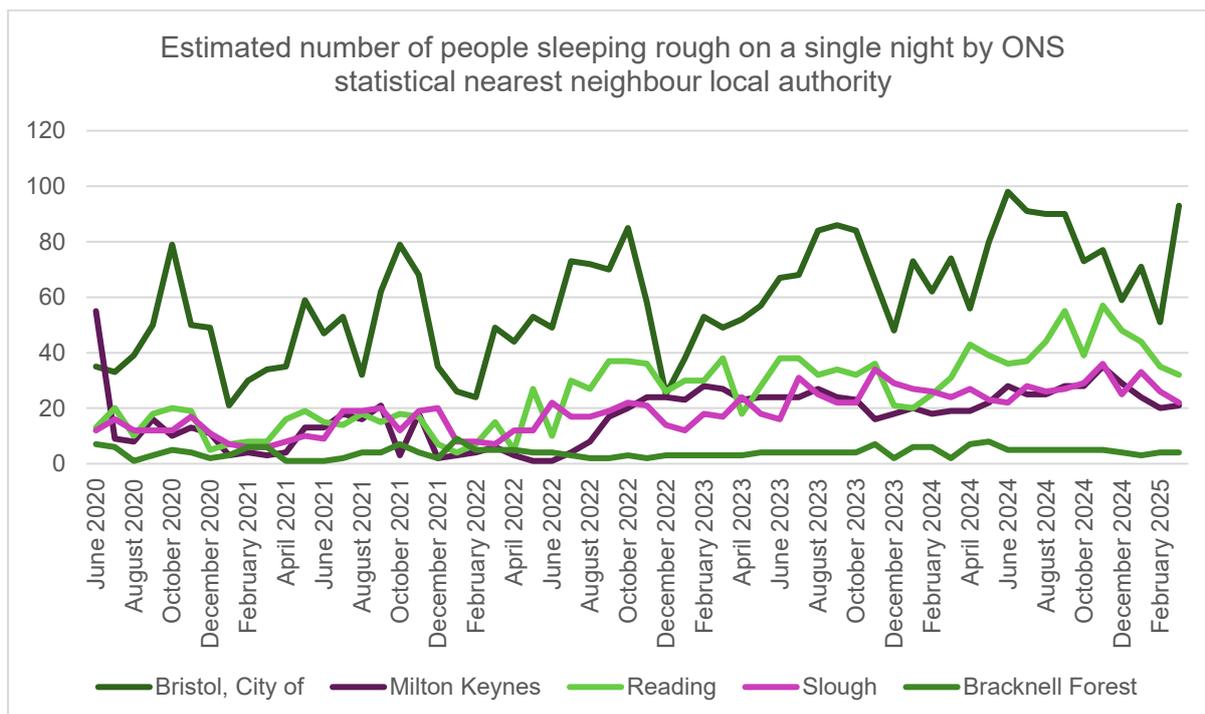
- **Cyclical homelessness of individuals and couples with multiple and complex needs**

Rent arrears and unacceptable behaviours that lead to eviction – primarily linked to substance misuse and usually connected to unmet mental health and neurodivergent needs – often result in repeated homelessness.

Rough Sleeping Data Framework⁴⁶ – what the data tells us

Monthly snapshot figures

When Reading’s monthly rough sleeping figures are compared to its ONS statistical nearest neighbour authorities – including those in the South and those with both the smallest and largest populations – it highlights that while Reading does not have the highest absolute numbers, it faces more sustained higher levels of rough sleeping than many of its statistical neighbours.



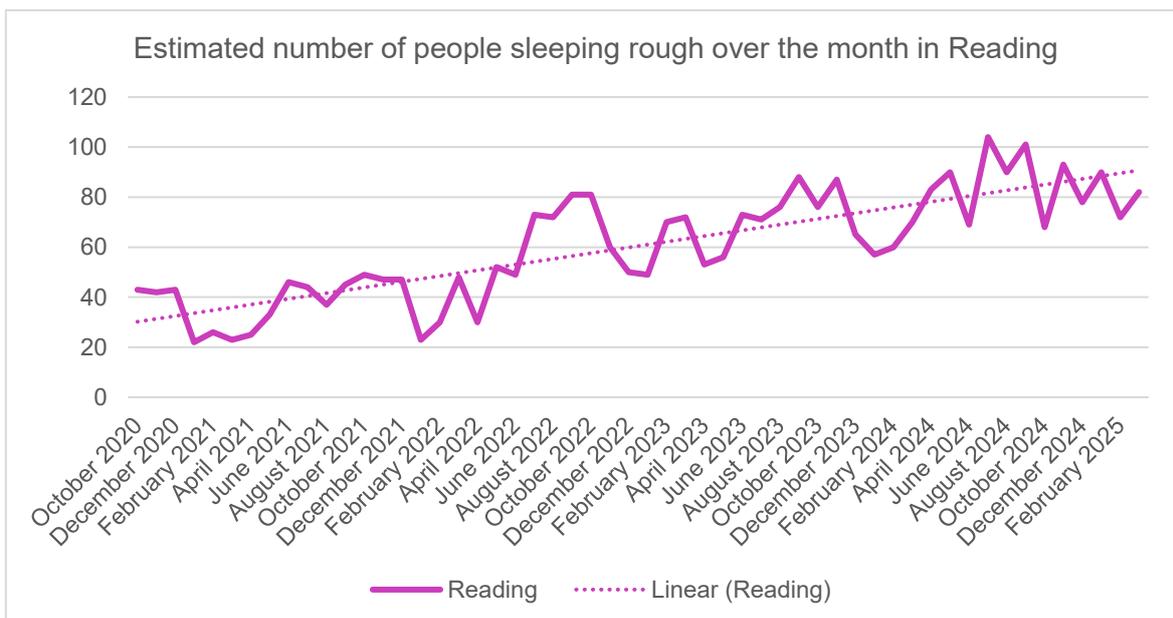
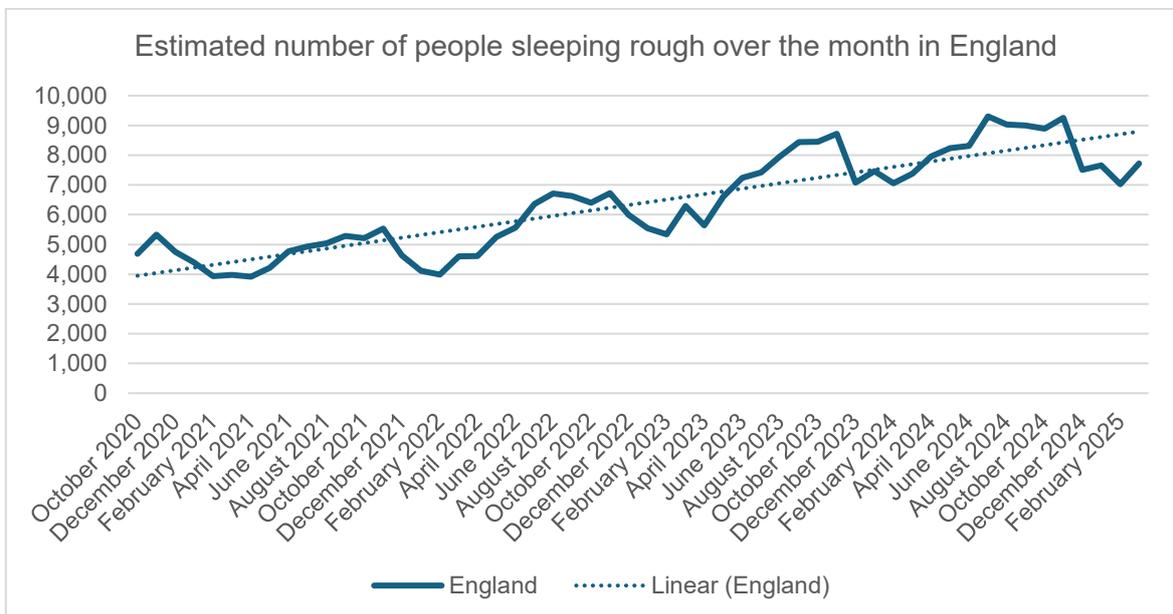
The most recent six months of published data (October 2024 to March 2025) show an average of 43 unique individuals sleeping rough on a single typical night each month in Reading.

Rough sleeping numbers over the month

Total numbers: National and local comparison

The following two graphs show the number of unique individuals recorded as sleeping rough each month in both England and Reading, from October 2020 to March 2025.

⁴⁶ MHCLG Rough Sleeping Data Framework, March 2025

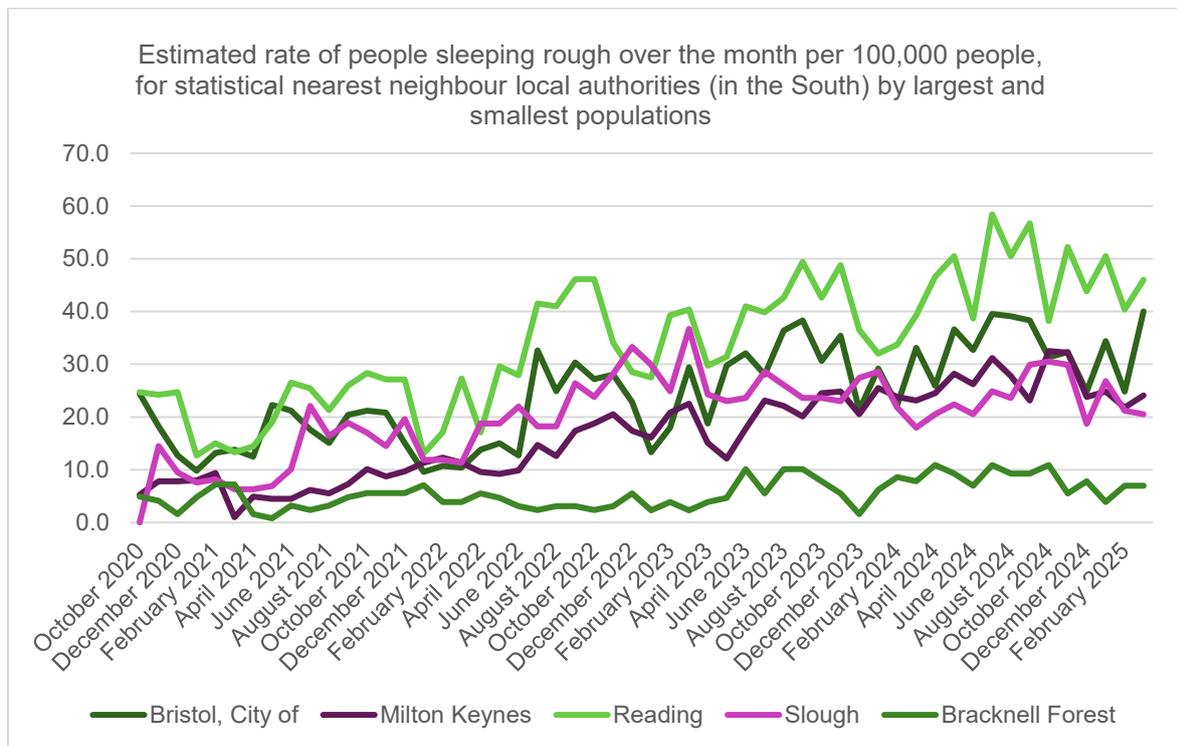


National, South East and local data show an upward trend over time, with clear peaks in the months June – October, most likely indicating that off-the-streets offers and interventions are increased during the winter months, and that engagement with accommodation offers and reconnections is higher during colder weather. Since April 2023, the number of people sleeping rough has grown significantly – both nationally and in Reading – with Reading seeing some recent months at, or nearing, 100 individuals.

The most recent six months of published data (October 2024 to March 2025) show an average of 81 unique individuals verified as sleeping rough each month in Reading.

Rough sleeping rates per 100,000 people each month - statistical nearest neighbour comparison

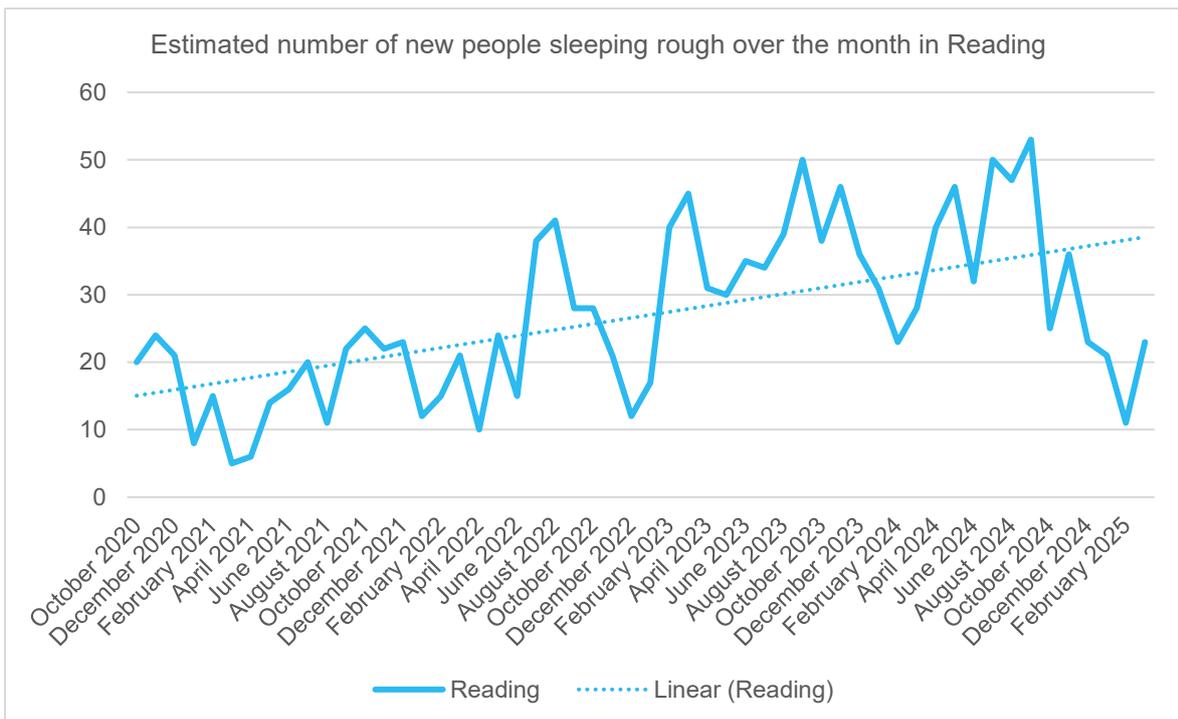
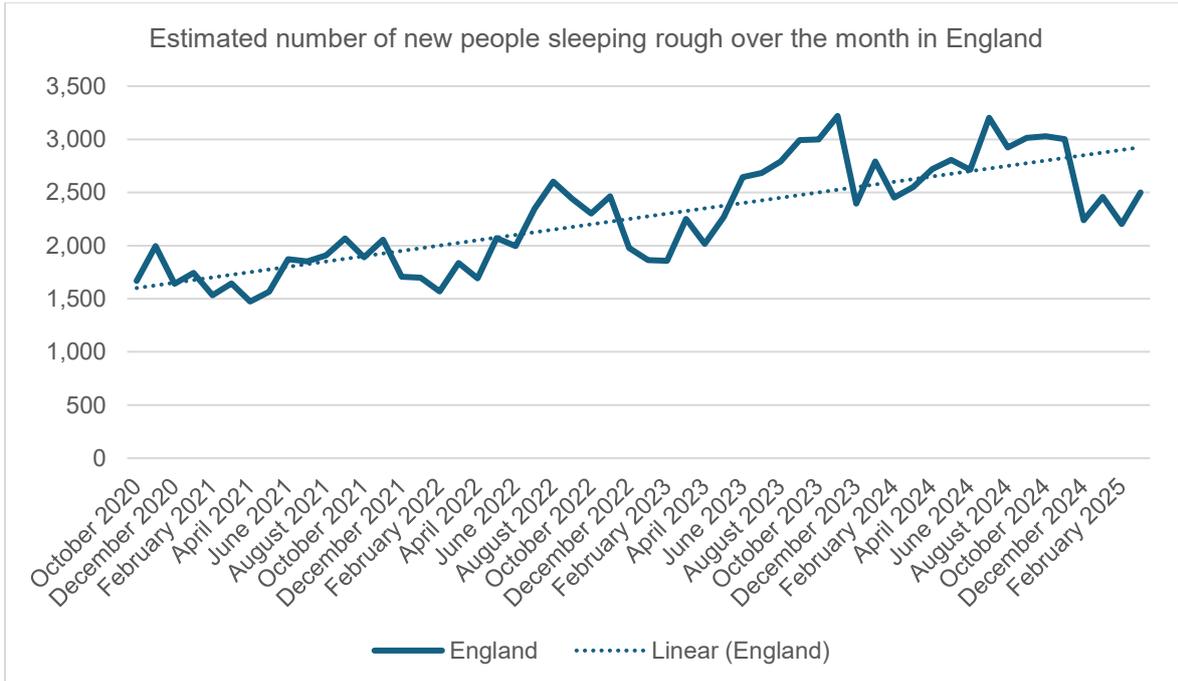
The graph below compares the rate per 100,000 people across Reading’s statistical nearest neighbour group, highlighting both the smallest and largest local authority populations within the cohort.



Although Reading does not record the highest annual rough sleeping snapshot figures compared to its ONS statistical nearest neighbour authorities such as Bristol, monthly data shows that Reading has the highest rate of people sleeping rough per 100,000 population.

New people sleeping rough over the month

The graphs below illustrate the estimated number of new individuals sleeping rough each month in both England and Reading. In Reading, peaks in the number of new people sleeping rough – notably in July 2023 and November 2024 – closely align with spikes in the overall monthly figures. This indicates a direct correlation, showing how those newly arriving to the streets can significantly influence the total number of people sleeping rough in any given month.

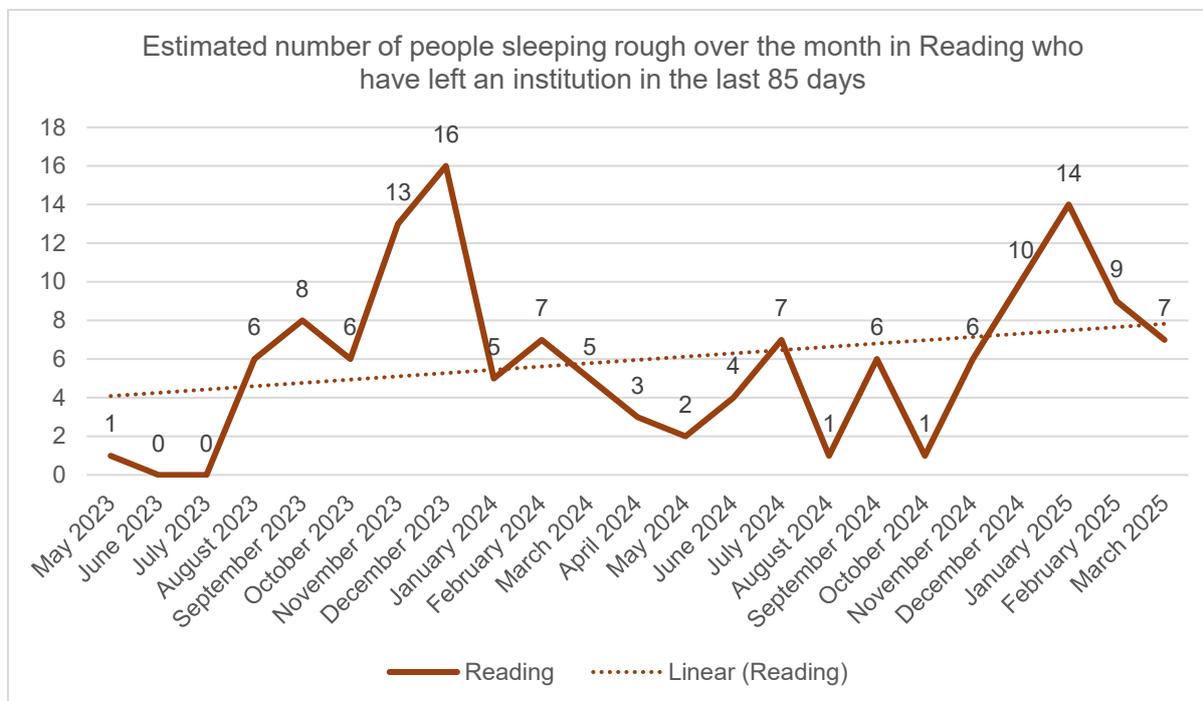


Care leavers

The estimated number of people sleeping rough over the month who are under 25 and are care leavers in Reading shows very minimal data – and no more than 10 individual care leavers were identified bedding down between April 2022 and March 2025.

Institution leavers

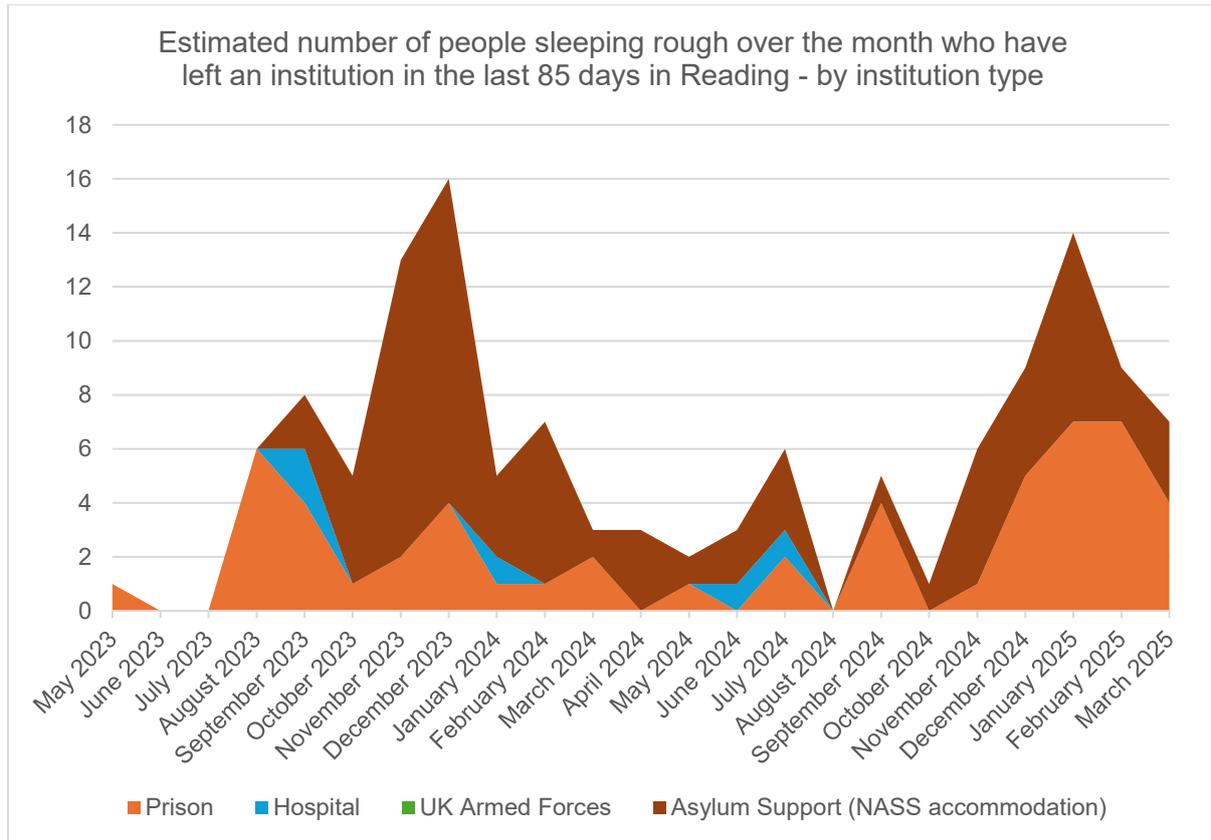
Aggregated data in the graph below highlights a growing challenge in supporting individuals transitioning out of institutional settings – including prisons, approved premises, CAS3 accommodation, general and psychiatric hospitals, the UK Armed Forces and Asylum Support accommodation (formerly referred to as NASS).



Notably, there are clear seasonal peaks in rough sleeping in November 2023 and January 2024, suggesting increased pressure during the winter months. However, the specific institutional drivers behind these peaks remain unclear.

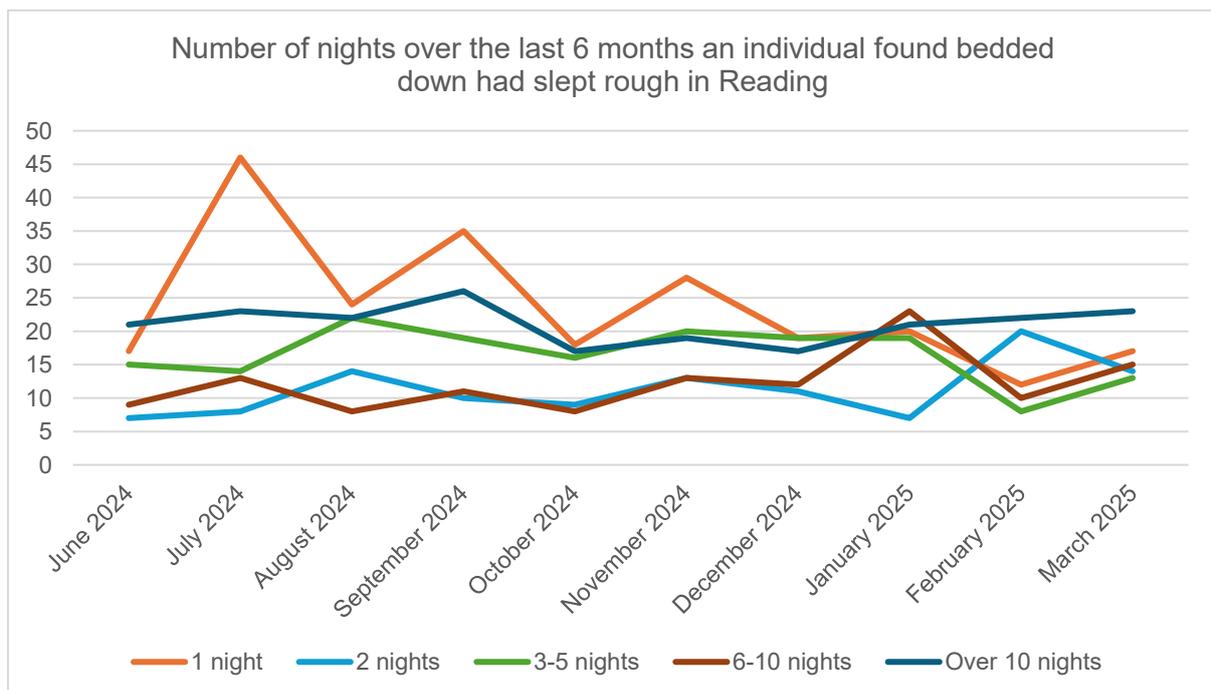
Several factors may be contributing, including a possible rise in Home Office decisions before the Christmas period, particularly with the reversion to 28 days’ notice on NASS accommodation, which could increase the number of people at risk. Winter pressures on the NHS may lead to more hospital discharges, potentially without adequate housing plans in place. The impact of early prison release programmes may also be influencing the upward trend. Overall, the data points to an absence of resettlement planning and support for people before they leave and/or a widening gap in post-institution support – reinforcing the need for more coordinated discharge and release planning.

Breaking this data down into institution type, as per the graph below, shows that Asylum Support (NASS accommodation) coming to an end consistently accounts for the highest number of people sleeping rough across the month who have left an institution in the last 85 days – with noticeable peaks around December 2023 and February 2025. Prison and Hospital discharges contribute smaller numbers but there are notable peaks, likely due to the reasons already noted. UK Armed Forces discharges are minimal, with only very occasional instances of rough sleeping showing in the data. The data shows fluctuations over time, but the dominance of asylum-related discharges suggests a potential gap in support pre- and post-accommodation for this group – but most likely short notice periods from Asylum Support accommodation being a significant contributing factor.



Length of time sleeping rough

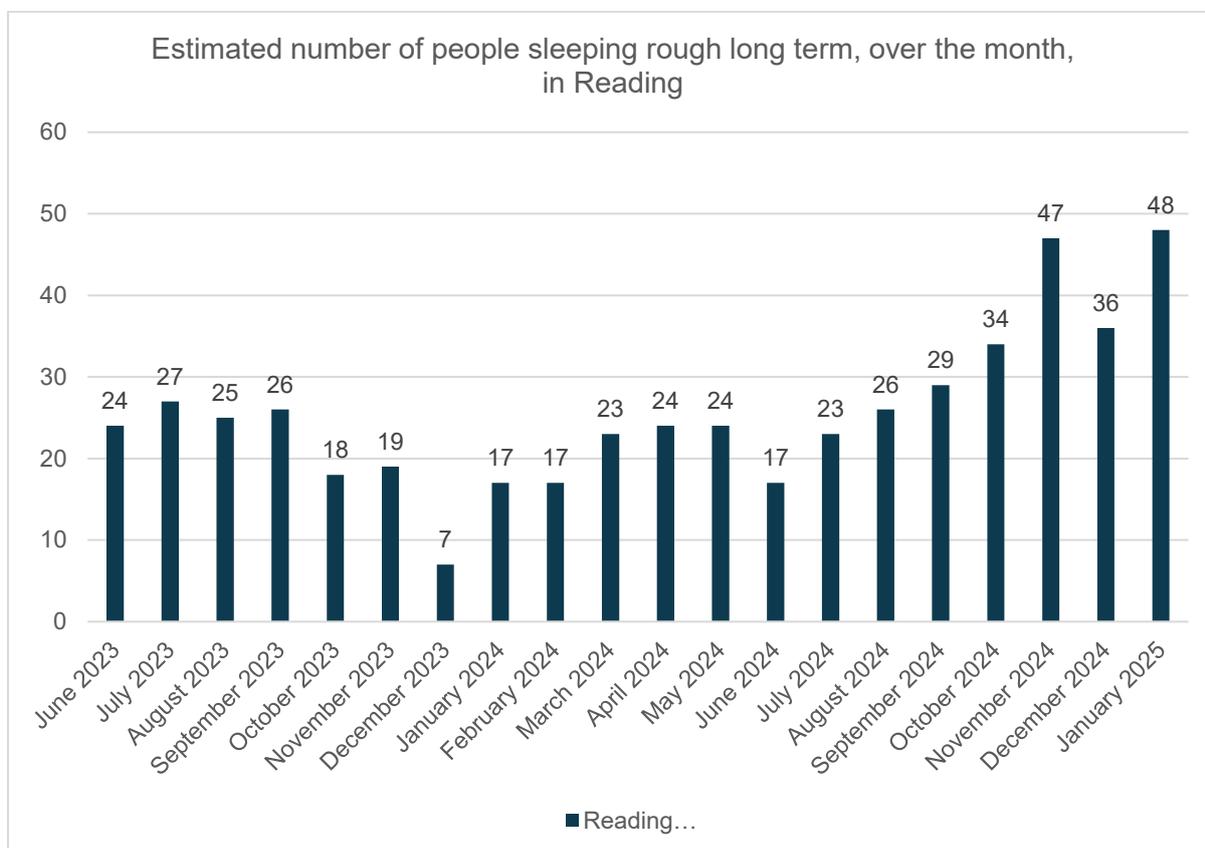
The graph below illustrates the distribution of rough sleeping durations in Reading over a six-month period from June 2024 to March 2025, showing how many nights individuals were found bedded down during each month.



The number of people found sleeping rough on a single night, and no others, has consistently declined – but with notable peaks in July, September, and November 2024. This could be attributed to improved immediate off-the-streets responses, or improvements in data capture. There is a peak in the number of people sleeping rough for 6 – 10 nights in January 2025, but this is congruent with the previously mentioned spikes in Asylum Support accommodation leavers at this same time.

Those sleeping rough for more than 10 nights indicates entrenched rough sleeping. There was a slight increase in this number in February and March 2025.

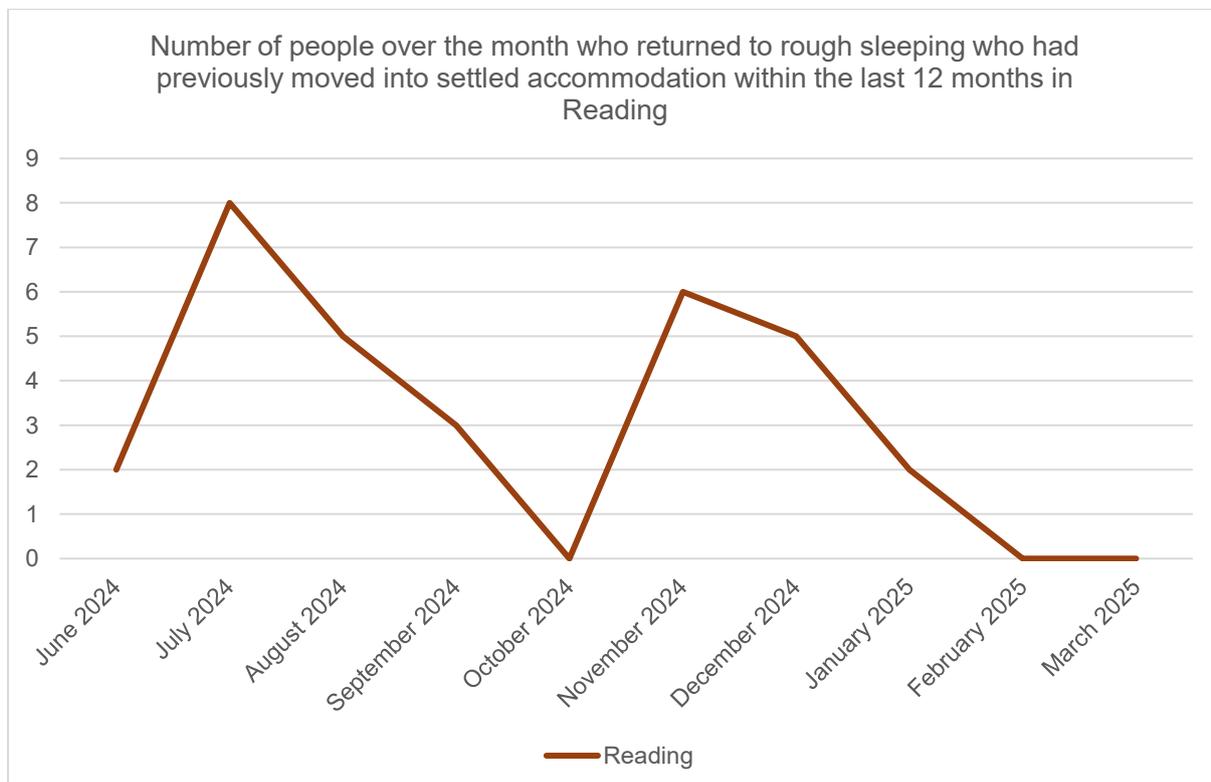
Fairly constant levels of people sleeping rough for 10 or more nights aligns with data collated on those people sleeping rough longer term in Reading – where longer term is defined as people who have been seen sleeping rough in three or more months out of the last 12 months. The graph below presents the monthly number of people sleeping rough long-term in Reading from June 2023 to January 2025.



The number of people sleeping rough long term initially rises from 24 in June 2023 to 26 in September, before dropping sharply to just 7 by January 2024. There is another increase in spring 2024, with peaks in April and May (24 each), followed by a dip in summer (17 in June and July). From August 2024 onward, the numbers climb steadily, reaching a notable spike in November (47) and peaking at 48 in January 2025. The pattern shows seasonal variation, points at which new interventions are implemented to reduce numbers, and the overall impact of systemic pressures that have already been outlined in this needs analysis.

Repeated homelessness: Returns to rough sleeping

The graph below tracks the monthly number of people returning to rough sleeping in Reading from June 2023 to March 2025 – where returning is defined as an individual who has previously been recorded as sleeping rough and is seen sleeping rough again after a period of being off the streets.



The graph directly above shows the monthly number of people in Reading who returned to rough sleeping after previously moving into settled accommodation within the past 12 months, covering the period from June 2024 to March 2025.

Both sets of data show an overall reduction in repeat rough sleeping following peaks in July and November/December 2024. We know there is a pattern of recurring rough sleeping for some complex individuals and couples – but the data also suggests gaps in long-term support, or challenges in sustaining accommodation after initial interventions. This links to needs analysis findings on homelessness duty data where people are losing supported accommodation due to rent arrears. This data is useful for evaluating the effectiveness of move-on support and identifying periods where people are more vulnerable to returning to the streets.

Demography of rough sleeping in Reading⁴⁷

Age

Snapshot and locally held data show that people under 25 rarely sleep rough, and when they do, it is typically for short periods – likely because of access to an immediate off-the-streets offer (crash pad) facility for those aged 18 – 24 and a specialist 40-bed supported housing provision for this group. The majority of people sleeping rough are aged 30–49, consistent with national trends. ONS data shows age-related disparities in mortality, with the average age at death for people sleeping rough being just 45.4 years for men and 43.2 for women – decades below the national life expectancy. This shows the need for targeted interventions for middle-aged individuals, who are disproportionately affected by chronic homelessness and health decline. Reading commissions several supported accommodation bed spaces to meet these specific gender and age needs.

Gender

Year on year, since 2022, national annual rough sleeping snapshot data shows an increase in single females/females in couples sleeping rough. In Reading, this trend is reversed with numbers captured in the snapshot being minimal, and proportionately declining, compared to single males. The Reading trend can be attributed to the commission of female specific and couple's specialist supported accommodation for those with complex and multiple needs and the strategy will seek to ensure that grant funded services to meet this gender-specific need are maintained. Those sleeping rough in Reading are predominantly male - consistently around 85%. No pregnant females, nor families with children are captured in the same rough sleeping data. This demonstrates that outreach support services and homelessness prevention services are significantly responsive to these priority needs.

Gender identities and sexual orientations

National research, including from Stonewall, Crisis, and the Albert Kennedy Trust (akt), shows that LGBTQ+ individuals are disproportionately affected by homelessness. Among young people, 77% cite family relationship breakdown, abuse, or being asked to leave home as the primary cause. LGBTQ+ youth are also twice as likely to experience hidden homelessness, such as sofa surfing or squatting.

⁴⁷ MHCLG Annual Rough Sleeping Snapshot, February 2025

Ethnicity and nationality

In Reading, available data on rough sleeping captures nationality, rather than ethnicity of those verified. Autumn 2023 and 2024 annual rough sleeping snapshot data shows consistency, at 46% and 47% respectively, in the proportion of EU and non-EU nationals verified on that night, compared to those with a UK or unknown nationality. This highlights a disproportionate number of people from both EU and non-EU countries sleeping rough in Reading, many of whom lack access to public funds. This contrasts with the broader population of Reading, where Census 2021 data shows that 64% were born in the UK and 36% were born outside the UK.

Religious beliefs

Currently, religious affiliation is not recorded for individuals rough sleeping or owed a homelessness duty in Reading, making it difficult to assess whether any particular religious group is disproportionately affected. However, given the ethnic diversity of those owed duties, and the likelihood that religion is an integral part of identity for many migrants and asylum seekers, there is a clear need for culturally responsive services that respect and accommodate religious practices.

Physical health

We know from prior health needs data collation that people experiencing rough sleeping disproportionately have physical ill-health, especially musculoskeletal and respiratory conditions. Regarding mental ill-health, learning disabilities and neurodivergent conditions, these tend to be suspected by professionals working with people sleeping rough in a supportive capacity, but are often not diagnosed.

Demand for support and accommodation services

In 2024/25 the Rough Sleeping Outreach Service received a total of 783 reports of rough sleeping – some of these will have been repeat referrals, about the same individual of concern, but each referral will have required a response of some description, with many requiring site attendance to offer support. On average the team were supporting over 100 people consistently or intermittently bedding down on the streets of Reading.

There are over 290 commissioned bed spaces available within supported accommodation services in Reading, offering a range of intensive and lighter-touch support for people who are rough sleeping, or at risk of it.

There were 326 unique referrals to the Rough Sleeping Initiatives team in 2024/25 to be considered for supported accommodation and there were 62 positive move-ons from services into semi or fully independent living. 72% of those referrals identified as male and 79% stated they were UK Nationals. To date in 2025/26, referral levels suggest a similar, if not increased level of referrals to supported accommodation services. Highest demand is from people sleeping rough, or who would be rough sleeping coming out of prison, coming out of Asylum Support accommodation, or where a less supportive environment has not been sustainable. The most prevalent support needs are offending histories, substance misuse, mental ill-health, and budgeting skills/managing money – all of which are significantly interlinked.

There were 143 referrals for tenancy sustainment support showing high demand for support to find accommodation, resettle and prevent homelessness. These referrals are in addition to referrals that the floating support service receives directly through their thrice weekly drop-ins.

In summary:

Reading continues to experience a sustained rise in rough sleeping, with monthly figures sometimes approaching 100 individuals. While Reading does not have the highest absolute numbers among its statistical neighbours, it consistently records one of the highest rates of rough sleeping per 100,000 population. This indicates a persistent and systemic challenge that requires targeted and sustained intervention.

A significant concern is the growing number of individuals experiencing long-term or repeated rough sleeping. Many of these individuals have complex needs, including mental ill-health, substance misuse, neurodivergence, and histories of offending. These needs are often undiagnosed or unsupported by other statutory services, contributing to tenancy breakdowns and cycling back into homelessness. The data also shows that a substantial proportion of people sleeping rough return to the streets after previously being housed, highlighting gaps in tenancy sustainment and move-on support when longer-term housing options are acquired.

The data shows a notable increase in rough sleeping among individuals recently leaving prisons, hospitals, and particularly from Asylum Support (NASS) accommodation. These peaks suggest a lack of coordinated planning and support.

Demographically, the majority of people sleeping rough in Reading are males aged 30–49, aligning with national trends. There is an overrepresentation of EU and non-EU nationals, many of whom face legal and eligibility barriers to accessing housing and support. In contrast, the number of young people and women sleeping rough remains low, likely due to the availability of targeted services such as a crash pad and gender-specific supported accommodation.

The data also shows seasonal patterns, with rough sleeping peaking between June and October. This may reflect reduced engagement with services during warmer months, and increased uptake of accommodation offers during winter. While many individuals sleep rough for only one or two nights, there is a growing proportion who are sleeping rough for over 10 nights, indicating more entrenched rough sleeping, particularly for those who have initially slept rough in Reading with no local connection.

To address these challenges, Reading's strategy should prioritise expanding housing-led and high-need services, including 24/7 supported accommodation and Housing First models. Strengthening discharge planning from institutions will be essential. The strategy should also enhance early intervention and tenancy sustainment services, and maintain targeted support for overrepresented groups, including middle-aged men and non-UK nationals. Commissioning decisions should be data-driven, using all available national data and local outreach intelligence to ensure responsive and effective service provision.

Learnings from Everyone In: March 2020

The Everyone In initiative, launched in March 2020 as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic, rapidly provided emergency accommodation to over 37,000 people sleeping rough or at risk of homelessness in England. It demonstrated the effectiveness of swift, coordinated action and cross-sector collaboration in addressing homelessness, significantly reducing Covid-19 transmission and mortality among people sleeping rough. The initiative also revealed the scale of hidden homelessness, gaps in data and policy – particularly for those with no recourse to public funds – and showed the need for inclusive and preventative rough sleeping strategies moving forward.

Hidden homelessness

There is no UK-wide definition of “hidden” homelessness. The term can mean different things to different people, and it is often applied inconsistently. Therefore, there are groups of people who are homeless but not routinely captured within data. This can include people who are living in overcrowded situations, insecure or uninhabitable conditions, people living in squats, people sofa surfing, or people or families living with friends or family because they cannot afford their own home.

Hidden homelessness refers to individuals who lack stable, secure housing but are not visible in official homelessness statistics or supported by local authorities. This includes people who are:

- Sofa surfing (staying temporarily with friends or family)
- Living in overcrowded or unsafe housing
- Staying in non-residential buildings (e.g., sheds, garages, or squats)
- Residing in temporary or insecure accommodation (e.g., hostels, B&Bs, or short-term lets)
- Avoiding contact with services due to stigma, fear, or lack of entitlement (e.g. migrants with no recourse to public funds)
- Women escaping domestic abuse, who often remain hidden for safety.
- Young people and ethnic minorities, who are disproportionately affected and underrepresented in data.

The hidden nature of their housing situation makes it difficult to measure the true scale of homelessness and to provide targeted support.

Reading’s strategy should prioritise early intervention and tailored support for sectors of the population vulnerable to hidden homelessness and include a commitment within the strategy’s action plan to expand our understanding of homelessness beyond statutory definitions and improve data and outreach to identify and support hidden groups in Reading.

Existing Council interventions to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping

Statutory support and assistance to prevent and relieve homelessness in Reading

Reading delivers statutory support in line with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, offering tailored advice and assistance to individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The council's Homelessness Prevention Service provides early intervention through the Prevention Duty, which applies to anyone threatened with homelessness within 56 days. This includes help to remain in current accommodation or secure alternative housing, often through negotiation with landlords or family, referrals to floating support services, and access to financial assistance such as Discretionary Housing Payments.

If homelessness cannot be prevented, the council applies the Relief Duty, which involves helping eligible individuals secure suitable accommodation within 56 days. This includes emergency accommodation for those in priority need, support with deposits or rent guarantees, and referrals to specialist housing such as supported accommodation or refuges. Each applicant receives a Personalised Housing Plan (PHP), outlining the steps both the council and the individual will take to resolve their housing situation.

Reading Borough Council goes beyond statutory obligations using the following proactive and innovative approaches:

- **Duty to refer:** Active engagement with public bodies under the Duty to Refer, ensuring that individuals identified by services such as hospitals, prisons, and job centres are connected to housing support early. Non-statutory and commissioned services use the same referral mechanisms to alert the homelessness prevention service early and facilitate access to services.
- **“Click Before You Evict” website:** Encourages landlords to seek support before starting eviction proceedings. It provides practical advice on managing rent arrears, tenancy breaches, and property issues, and signposts tenants to relevant support services. The scheme aims to resolve problems early, reduce evictions, and prevent homelessness through collaboration between landlords, tenants, and the council.
- **Early intervention and multi-agency collaboration:** Close working with health services, probation, children's and adult social care, and voluntary sector partners to identify individuals and families at risk before they reach crisis point. This includes joint working protocols and shared case management for complex needs – including tailored support for transitioning care leavers.
- **Housing Needs Customer Access Team:** Plays a key frontline role in homelessness prevention. As part of the wider Homelessness Prevention Service, they are often the first point of contact for individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. When someone contacts the council – online, by phone, email, or in person – they are initially assessed by a Housing Needs Customer Access Officer. This officer conducts a short triage assessment to understand the situation and gather basic information. If the person is homeless on the day of contact, their case is escalated to a Duty Officer for immediate action. If they are at risk of homelessness within 56 days, they are referred for a full assessment and an appointment is arranged with a Homelessness Prevention

Officer to develop a Personalised Housing Plan (PHP). The team also supports individuals by helping them understand their housing options, access emergency accommodation, submit required documentation, complete consent-to-share forms, and navigate applications for financial support such as Discretionary Housing Payments or the Rent Guarantee Scheme.

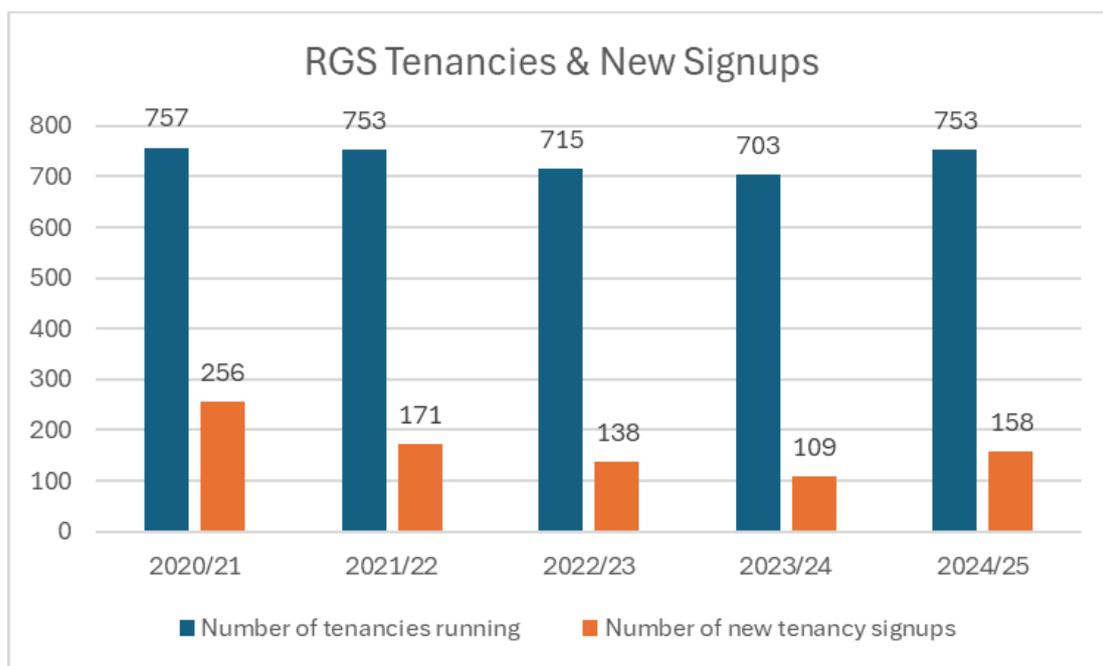
- **Digital access and self-service tools:** Investment in online portals and digital tools that allow residents to self-refer, upload documents, and track their housing applications, improving accessibility and transparency.
- **Proactive approach to family evictions:** Home visits are used to explore the circumstances behind notices from family members, with mediation and support offered to help young people and young families remain in the family home where appropriate.
- **Pilot to enhance focus on early intervention and temporary accommodation move-on:** A change in service delivery to trial focussed teams working on different elements of the HRA – split into three teams: early intervention, prevention and relief and temporary accommodation move-on. Initially planned to run for six months the pilot began in March 2025, aiming to reduce crisis approaches to the service, improve temporary accommodation throughout and manage demand.

Temporary accommodation provisions

The Council utilises 86 purpose-built temporary accommodation units, offering a mix of studio, one-, two-, and three-bedroom flats across three sites in the borough. This includes 28 two-bedroom modular units. Additionally, 40 studio-style modular units at Caversham Road operate as 24/7 staffed supported accommodation but remain part of the Council's temporary housing stock. Where demand exceeds capacity, permanent housing may be used flexibly to meet temporary accommodation needs.

Support to access the private rented sector

In Reading, the Rent Guarantee Scheme (RGS) facilitates access to affordable private rented accommodation for households threatened with homelessness, offering guaranteed rent at LHA level, a guaranteed deposit in excess of industry standards and ongoing tenancy support. Established in 1999, the Scheme has been recognised as a model of private sector engagement best practice by our MHCLG Advisor. As the gap between the LHA rate and local rents has increased, the Scheme has innovated in order to remain attractive to landlords. The introduction of one-off incentive payments for new tenancies, and as a prevention tool where RGS tenancies were at risk of ending, was piloted in 2023 and brought within the Scheme's budget in 2024 and has brought the total number of tenancies running on the Scheme back up to 2010 levels. While the number of new tenancies signed up each year was reducing towards the end of 2024, this decline is now reversing. That the total number of tenancies has recovered in 2024-25, despite fewer new tenancies being created, illustrates the effectiveness of using incentives to prevent existing tenancies ending.



The Rent Guarantee Scheme offers all accepted applicants the opportunity to attend a Workshop, at which they are introduced to money management techniques. Every tenancy signup is followed up with a one-to-one appointment with the RGS Money Advisor, who supports households with debt, budgeting, and priority bills, as well as accessing employment and claiming relevant benefits.

The Rent Guarantee Scheme Workshop also offers advice on how to find suitable and affordable homes to rent in the private sector. Supporting households to identify their own accommodation options is highly effective in Reading, with over 15% of properties brought to the Scheme in this way. The use of the Prevention Fund to help households with the upfront costs of private renting, for properties which are not let via the Rent Guarantee Scheme, resulted in 127 new tenancies secured in 2024-25. Per tenancy created, the amount spent on Rent Guarantee Scheme and Prevention Fund support represents a significant cost avoidance on the use of temporary and emergency accommodation and offers affordable and settled homes for homeless households.

Reading’s private sector initiatives remain our primary homelessness prevention tool, and their success can be seen in the most common outcomes for households where Prevention or Relief Duties have been accepted, where Reading outperforms its neighbours in helping to create private sector tenancies. Maintaining this high number of tenancies facilitated involves close monitoring of market developments and upcoming legislation, and continued engagement with local landlords, which must continue as essential threads running through our new Strategy.

Allocation of social housing

Reading Borough Council allocates social housing through its Homechoice at Reading scheme, a Choice-Based Lettings system that enables eligible residents to bid for available properties. The Homechoice scheme is delivered in partnership with Registered Providers (Housing Associations) and other stakeholders to ensure fairness and transparency.

Applicants must meet specific criteria, including being at least 16 years old, not subject to immigration control, and having lived in Reading for at least three consecutive years, although exceptions may apply. Applicants are placed into priority bands from Band 1 (highest priority) to Band 4, or Band NPFH (No Priority for Housing), based on housing need. Factors influencing banding include homelessness status, medical or welfare needs, and risk of harm. Those with rent arrears, antisocial behaviour, or who are deemed intentionally homeless may be placed in Band NPFH.

In 2024, according to MHCLG Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS), Reading had a total of 74,855 dwellings, comprising 6,982 local authority dwellings, 4,709 private registered provider dwellings, and 63,164 private sector dwellings. Only 16% of all dwellings in Reading were social or affordable housing let by the local authority or a registered provider, highlighting the limited supply of social housing in the borough. The Council is aiming to provide 362 new council owned homes by 2028/29, including schemes developed in collaboration with Adult Social Care.

By the end of 2024/25, 4,462 households were on Reading's Housing Register, rising to 4,675 by July 2025, with an average of 160 new applications submitted each month. However, only 374 households were successfully housed in 2024/25, representing fewer than 9% of applicants. Between April and July 2025 alone, 645 new applications were received, while just 166 households were housed, further illustrating the gap between demand and supply.

The breakdown of housing need shows that the majority of applicants require one-bedroom properties (39%), followed by two-bedroom (30%), and three-bedroom (23%) homes. Larger properties are in much shorter supply, with only 6% needing four bedrooms, and fewer than 1% requiring five or more bedrooms.

In terms of priority banding, 40% of applicants are in Band 4, indicating lower priority, while 37% are in Band NPFH, meaning they are not currently eligible for housing. Only 1% are in Band 1, the highest priority group, and 8% and 15% are in Bands 2 and 3, respectively. This distribution reflects the significant number of applicants with limited access to social housing due to either lower assessed need or eligibility restrictions.

To help address under occupation and free up larger homes for families in need, Reading Borough Council offers a Tenant's Incentive Scheme for Reading Borough Council tenants. This scheme supports tenants who are living in homes with more bedrooms than they require or in properties with adaptations they no longer need. Eligible tenants – those with a secure tenancy of at least one year and a clear rent account – can receive support to move to a more suitably sized property. The scheme aims to reduce under occupation, alleviate overcrowding, shorten time spent in temporary accommodation, and increase availability of adapted homes. A dedicated officer provides personalised support throughout the moving process, including help to remain in familiar areas close to family or essential services.

Reading Borough Council also operates quota queues for vulnerable groups such as social care clients, refugees, travelling families, and those involved in fostering or adoption. Homeless applicants may receive direct offers of accommodation as part of their Personalised Housing Plan, in line with the Homelessness Reduction Act. Given the high demand and limited supply, the council encourages applicants to explore alternative housing options such as Homefinder UK, sheltered housing, and mutual exchanges.

Adaptations and Disabled Facilities Grants

Reading Borough Council offers Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to help residents with disabilities live more independently and safely in their homes. These grants can fund a wide range of adaptations, including extensions, stairlifts, level-access showers, ramps, and kitchen modifications. The maximum mandatory grant available is £30,000, however additional discretionary grants are made available because of the Regulatory Reform Order 2002 which are determined by the needs within each Local Authority area. DFGs are funded by the Better Care Fund and are available to those who live in private accommodation, such as owner occupiers, private rented and Registered Provider accommodation.

Eligibility is based on both need and financial circumstances. Adults are subject to means testing, while children under 19 are not. Applicants must intend to remain in the property for a minimum period – 10 years for owner-occupiers and 5 years for tenants.

Council tenants are eligible but are not subject to a means test and this is funded separately from the Housing Revenue Account. Those pursuing Right to Buy, mutual exchange or a move via Homechoice at Reading may be excluded from major adaptations.

The Council offers minor works funding (up to £1,000) and discretionary grants for specific needs such as relocation or health-related improvements. In some cases, if the applicant's financial contribution exceeds the cost of the works, they may still apply but will need to self-fund the adaptation.

Reading Borough Council monitors its DFG programme through key performance indicators (KPIs), including the number of referrals, assessments, approvals, completions, and average timeframes. These metrics help ensure the service is efficient and responsive. Funding demand often exceeds availability, so applications are prioritised using an Adaptations Priority Tool.

Supported accommodation for people at risk of or currently rough sleeping

Reading Borough Council recognises that homelessness cannot be addressed through accommodation alone. Many individuals require a range of housing-related and personal support to overcome challenges such as mental ill-health, substance misuse, domestic abuse, financial hardship, and social isolation.

We deliver a comprehensive, multi-agency response to rough sleeping through our Rough Sleeping Initiatives team and commissioned partners. The team includes specialist officers in partnerships, data and evaluation and contracts and procurement to ensure effective commissioning and monitoring of services, strategic alignment with national funding programmes, data-led decision-making/evaluation, and co-ordination of multiagency panels and access pathways.

Our approach is to commission trauma-informed, gender-sensitive and person-centred support, within psychologically informed environments, tailored to meet the needs of individuals facing complex and multiple disadvantages. Commissioned services include outreach, navigators, complex case workers, off-the-streets emergency accommodation, supported housing, and tenancy sustainment. Staff work closely with health professionals to support clients in accessing mental health services, substance misuse treatment, primary care services and employment and training opportunities. The range of services commissioned

ensures individuals can access tailored support at every stage – from when they are rough sleeping through to sustaining long-term tenancies. These services support the Council in meeting its statutory prevention and relief duties.

Street-based outreach and engagement

- **Rough Sleeping Outreach Service** responds to reports of rough sleeping, engages individuals on the streets, and facilitates access to accommodation or reconnection to their home area. The team works closely with Reading's Multiple Disadvantage Outreach Team (MDOT) and Health Outreach Liaison Team (HOLT), both commissioned by Health to support individuals who are rough sleeping or vulnerably housed and facing challenges related to substance misuse, physical health, and mental ill-health.

Emergency and seasonal provision

These services operate regardless of local connection or access to public funds, ensuring a humanitarian response to immediate risk.

- **Cold Weather SWEP** activated when temperatures fall to zero degrees or below for three consecutive nights, offering emergency accommodation to prevent deaths on the streets.
- **Heatwave SWEP** activated during heat-health alerts, providing water, sun protection, and access to cool spaces. Emergency accommodation may be offered during extreme heat.
- **B4N Winter Shelter**, operated and funded by FAITH with contributions from the Council, provides 20 additional winter bed spaces from January to March.

Supported accommodation pathways

Reading offers a diverse range of supported housing options tailored to different needs – there is capacity to accommodate over 290 people across interventions, plus four bed spaces for those needing an immediate off the streets offer:

- **Nova Project:** 10-bed female-only service with 24/7 staffing, trauma-informed and gender-specific support for women with complex needs.
- **Caversham Road Pods:** 40 self-contained modular units with 24/7 staffing for individuals with histories of rough sleeping and multiple complex needs.
- **Intensive and Engaging Support:** 36 bed spaces rooms (including 4 for couples), 3 emergency overnight beds, and full board catering with 24/7 staffing. It brings together multiple services in one location (a hub) to simplify access to support for people experiencing rough sleeping. 20 beds in shared cluster flats, including self-catering facilities, with staff available during office hours and 24/7 on-call support from the main hub service.
- **Young Person's Service:** 40 units for young people aged 18 – 24, including a crash pad and four young parent flats, with access to training and wellbeing facilities.

- **Housing First and Couples Accommodation Pathway:** 31 units, for 37 people, offering permanent tenancies with wraparound support for individuals and couples with complex needs.
- **Accommodation for Ex-Offenders (AfEO):** Council-led project supporting prison leavers into private rented accommodation with tenancy sustainment support.
- **Working Towards Independence Accommodation:** 106 bedspaces across 20 properties for individuals needing housing-related support before moving on to independent living.

Tenancy and employment access support

- **Floating Support Service:** Cross-tenure support for tenancy sustainment and resettlement, with tiered levels of intervention and open-access drop-ins.
- **Launchpad 135 Work and Life Skills Centre:** Fully funded by Launchpad Reading, offering training, counselling, and employment support to residents in supported housing.

Relevant service reviews

MHCLG Homelessness Advice and Support Team (HAST) review: April 2023

The Homelessness Advice and Support Team (HAST) visited Reading Borough Council in April 2023 to assess its approach to homelessness and rough sleeping. The feedback provided a detailed evaluation across ten thematic areas, identifying strengths and areas for improvement.

Key findings:

Strategic direction and leadership – Reading Borough Council had a homelessness strategy in place, but it lacked a dynamic delivery plan that reflected local priorities and was co-produced with partners. While corporate leadership supported homelessness services, it was advised there was room for improvement in the strategic use of the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG). Accurate H-CLIC data reporting was emphasised as critical for securing funding and informing service development.

Prevention and implementation of the HRA – Staff demonstrated a good understanding of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) and applied prevention tools such as home visits and private rented sector offers. However, the volume and effectiveness of prevention work remained below regional averages. Delays in prevention assessments and high caseloads were identified as contributors to limiting early intervention opportunities and increasing reliance on temporary accommodation.

Access to accommodation and temporary accommodation – Reading has well-developed, innovative private rented sector schemes, including rent guarantees and landlord incentives, and has invested in supported housing options. Despite these efforts, move-on from supported housing remained a challenge. The council was seen to be having some success in avoiding placing families in B&Bs, although the use of nightly paid accommodation was increasing. A need to develop a Temporary Accommodation placement policy was identified.

Partnerships and governance - Partnerships were generally strong and valued by both council staff and external partners. However, many partnerships operated informally without governance structures, posing a risk if key individuals left. It was suggested that the Reading Homelessness Partnership could be leveraged to strengthen statutory homelessness coordination.

Key recommendations:

- Maintain manageable caseloads and ensure regular staff supervision.
- Improve early prevention efforts and align case recording with HRA definitions.
- Guarantee all service users are offered at least one face-to-face interview.
- Develop a formal Temporary Accommodation procurement and placement strategy.
- Enhance public messaging and transparency around homelessness services and successes.
- Use data more effectively to inform KPIs and drive service improvements.

MHCLG Rough Sleeping Deep Dive: March 2025

The deep dive into Reading's rough sleeping response, conducted in April 2025, was structured around the four national pillars: Prevention, Intervention, Recovery, and Systems Support. It was prompted by a significant rise in rough sleeping between July and September 2024 and aimed to explore underlying causes, assess current practice, and identify opportunities for improvement.

Key findings:

Prevention – Reading demonstrated strengths in early identification and support, including effective use of the Duty to Refer and strong links with probation services. However, gaps were identified in consistent homelessness assessments for people sleeping rough. The supported housing pathway was identified as generous but at capacity, with limited provision for those with complex needs. There was also an identified need to improve public messaging and address misconceptions about rough sleeping being a gateway to social housing.

Intervention – Reading's outreach model was identified as flexible and multi-agency collaboration was evident, particularly through partnerships with St Mungo's and other local services. A key strength identified was the "sit-up" service, which provides an immediate off-the-streets bed space for anyone found sleeping rough – even those with restricted eligibility. However, the absence of a universal emergency accommodation offer for those without a local connection was expressed as a concern, as was the delay in reconnections. MHCLG heard from partners that there were challenges in consistency of responses to safeguarding alerts and that access to mental health support remained difficult for some individuals.

A significant challenge identified was the presence of encampments, with around a third of people rough sleeping in Reading residing in these settings. Key findings highlighted the need for improved engagement with landowners to facilitate quicker and more coordinated responses.

Recovery – Reading was seen as having a strong floating support offer and regular progression meetings to support move-on from supported housing. However, partners advised MHCLG they feel there is a lack of long-term support for addiction and mental health, limited detox and rehab access, and the absence of a dedicated multi-disciplinary team for the Target Priority Group (TPG) were noted as areas for development. While returns to rough sleeping were noted as low, partners identified to the MHCLG that stigma and access to adult social care remained barriers to full recovery.

Systems Support – MHCLG found there to be clear leadership commitment, with Housing and Social Care operating under a joint directorate. Reading's Rough Sleeping Strategy was identified as needing to be updated. The need for better integration of lived experience into strategic planning, improved data accuracy, and stronger governance structures (e.g. a dedicated task and finish group and representation on the Safeguarding Adults Board) were key recommendations.

Key Recommendations:

- Ensure all people sleeping rough have a homelessness assessment recorded on H-CLIC.
- Establish a multi-agency task group to develop sustainable accommodation and support for Reading's Target Priority Group.
- Improve pathways for people leaving institutions and Home Office accommodation.
- Expand complex needs accommodation and long-term support for substance misuse and mental health.
- Involve people with lived experience in service design and strategic planning.
- Update and integrate the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies.
- Offer a time-limited sit-up space to all individuals found rough sleeping, regardless of local connection, while implementing assertive reconnection protocols.
- Develop a coordinated approach to encampments, including proactive engagement with landowners and a balance of support and enforcement.

Women's Rough Sleeping Census 2022 - 25

The Women's Rough Sleeping Census (WRSC) was developed to address the invisibility of women in traditional homelessness data and services. Women often sleep in hidden, unsafe, and transient locations – such as parks, stairwells, or 24-hour venues – to avoid harm, making them less likely to be counted or supported. Conducted across 88 local authorities in 2024, the WRSC used a gender-informed, multi-agency approach to collect data over seven days, identifying over 1,000 women who had slept rough in the previous three months. The 2024 census also captured qualitative insights, revealing widespread experiences of violence, trauma, and barriers to accessing support, particularly for women fleeing domestic abuse or lacking a local connection.

The findings exposed significant gaps in service provision, with most women not engaged with housing or homelessness services and fewer than one in four accessing health support. Many cycled through insecure accommodation, making their homelessness harder to detect and address. The WRSC calls for a redefinition of rough sleeping, improved data collection, dedicated funding for safe and trauma-informed services, and integrated strategies across housing, health, and VAWG services to ensure women are no longer unseen or unsupported.

Reading is scheduled to undertake the Women's Rough Sleeping Census in 2025 and utilise findings to inform commissioning and improve services for vulnerable women.

Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI): February – March 2025

The JTAI of Reading's multi-agency response to children aged 0–7 who are victims of domestic abuse was conducted from 24 February to 14 March 2025. The inspection was carried out by a team of inspectors from Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP). The JTAI inspectors found that while there are strengths in early protective interventions and pre-birth assessments, there were serious weaknesses in identifying and responding to the needs of children and families affected by domestic abuse. These gaps can contribute to housing instability and increase the risk of homelessness,

particularly where safeguarding and support systems are not effectively coordinated. The inspection highlighted the need for improved strategic oversight, consistent decision-making, and better integration of services – including housing, health, and social care – to prevent vulnerable families from falling into crisis.

Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach

The Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach is a collaborative framework that integrates health considerations into policymaking across all sectors to improve population health and reduce health inequalities. In the context of homelessness and rough sleeping, HiAP recognises that health is both a cause and consequence of homelessness, and that addressing it requires coordinated action beyond the health sector.

Key principles relevant to Reading's strategy include:

- **Cross-sector collaboration:** Encouraging joint working between housing, health, social care, criminal justice, and voluntary sectors to address the complex needs of people experiencing homelessness.
- **Prevention and early intervention:** Embedding health promotion and prevention into housing and homelessness services to tackle root causes such as mental ill health, substance misuse, and domestic abuse.
- **Equity and inclusion:** Prioritising the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised groups, ensuring equitable access to services and reducing health disparities.
- **Evidence-informed action:** Using data and local insights to shape interventions that address the social determinants of health, such as poverty, unemployment, and insecure housing.

By adopting a HiAP lens, Reading can strengthen its homelessness strategy through holistic, preventative, and person-centred approaches that improve health outcomes and reduce long-term service demand.

Conclusions

Drawing on Census 2021 data, local service intelligence, and national policy developments, the review has outlined the demographic, economic, and housing context in which homelessness and rough sleeping occur. It has highlighted key pressures – including population changes and growth, affordability challenges and health inequalities – that shape demand for services and influence housing stability.

The findings of this strategic needs analysis will support the development of targeted interventions and help ensure that future services are inclusive, responsive, and aligned with the needs of Reading's residents.

This document therefore represents the initial phase in developing a combined Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for Reading. It brings together a wide range of data and analysis to inform a strategic response that is evidence-based and tailored to Reading's needs. Crucially, it will inform the strategy's priorities and underpin the development of a detailed action plan to guide delivery over the next five years.

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Consultation review and outcomes for: Share your views on how we should tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in Reading

Objectives of the consultation

The consultation aimed to gather valuable insights from the public, partners, and professionals on the proposed priorities and guiding principles for Reading's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 – 31. It also provided an important opportunity to reflect on how current services are being delivered – exploring whether they effectively meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness, as well as the expectations of our partners across statutory bodies, voluntary organisations, community groups, and faith-based services.

Before adopting or revising a homelessness strategy, housing authorities are required to consult with a range of stakeholders – including members of the public, local authorities, voluntary organisations, and any other groups they deem relevant. Meaningful engagement with service users and specialist agencies that support people experiencing homelessness is also strongly encouraged, ensuring that the strategy reflects lived experience and frontline expertise. The Homelessness Act 2002 sets out the legal framework for homelessness strategies in England. Importantly, under Section 3(4) of the Act, a housing authority cannot include specific actions to be undertaken by another organisation without first securing their agreement – reinforcing the importance of collaboration and shared ownership in delivering effective solutions.

How consultation results influenced the way the strategy was drafted and delivered

Consultation responses were collated, reviewed, and thematically analysed. Feedback was then shared with the public, stakeholders, and service users, outlining which contributions were incorporated into the strategy and providing clear explanations for those that were not.

The proposed priorities, consulted on, for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-30 were:

- **Priority 1:** Intervening early to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping
- **Priority 2:** Breaking the cycle of homelessness and rough sleeping
- **Priority 3:** Providing access to decent, suitable and sustainable homes

The proposed principles were:

- **Collaborative and joined-up working** - improving how we work with other government funded organisations such as hospitals, prisons and the Home Office
- **Community, voluntary and faith sector support** - making our partnerships stronger in supporting the work of local charities and community interest groups
- **Customer and stakeholder input** - improving how we gather and use feedback from our customers
- **Cross-sector accountability** - helping people to receive support from multiple services to keep a roof over their head
- **Innovation** - finding new ways to deliver our homelessness services that offer best value for money

- **Access to services and information** - making sure that housing options and advice are available to everyone, either on-line or in person, and promoting public awareness of homelessness issues
- **Data-driven delivery** - using the information we collect about Reading residents to understand how best to deliver services

Consultation methods

The consultation on the three proposed priorities and seven guiding principles ran from 3rd July to 10th August 2025. A three-pronged approach was used to ensure a broad and representative range of views were captured across the community.

There were:

1. **Consultation method:** Online survey via RBC's Go Vocal platform (see Appendix A), promoted through social media.
Target audience: Residents, businesses, university students, statutory partners, voluntary, community, and faith sector organisations and internal Council staff.
Supporting Document: See: *Go Vocal Consultation Responses Summary*
2. **Consultation method:** Cross-sector workshops and focus groups held via Microsoft Teams (see Appendix B for PowerPoint presentation used).
Target audience: Statutory sector partners, voluntary, community, and faith sector (VCFS) organisations supporting people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
3. **Consultation Method:** Service providers supported individuals to complete survey questions, using paper copies where needed.
Target audience: People using homelessness and rough sleeping services delivered or commissioned by Reading Borough Council.

Chronology of key promotional activities

Date:	Promotional activity
3 rd July 2025	Launch email, with poster, to homelessness and rough sleeping professionals/stakeholders, other sector partners and voluntary, community and faith sector partners to support promotion of the consultation
9 th July 2025	Homelessness Prevention Officers Team Meeting
10 th July 2025	Team Reading newsletter to council employees
17 th July 2025	Reading Lived Experience Forum (Homelessness and Rough Sleeping)
22 nd July 2025	Workshop with homelessness, rough sleeping and other sector stakeholders
28 th July 2025	Workshop with homelessness, rough sleeping and other sector stakeholders
29 th July 2025	Housing Needs Managers Meeting

29th July 2025	Domestic Abuse Forum
2nd August 2025	Deputy Leader's column for The Reading Chronicle: Have your say on tackling homelessness in Reading Reading Chronicle
5th August 2025	Drop-in for homelessness, rough sleeping and other sector stakeholders
7th August 2025	Drop-in for homelessness, rough sleeping and other sector stakeholders

The on-line consultation was promoted via the following means:

- **Social media:** Facebook, X and NextDoor.
- **On-line:** Consultation hub Go Vocal, RBC website, Council employees Intranet, email signatures across Housing Needs, email to promote to all known stakeholders.
- **Leaflets and posters:** QR code for accessibility (see Appendix B).
- **Multiple cross-sector partnership meetings:** including the Access Panel, Co-production meetings, Domestic Abuse Forum.

Invites to the two-hour workshop/focused sessions were targeted at operational and managerial partners across council and non-council statutory partners – including health, criminal justice, children's and adult social care, commissioned homelessness and rough sleeping and VCFS services.

Ensuring inclusive representation and accessible engagement

To ensure the consultation captured a diverse range of voices – including those with lived experience of homelessness and rough sleeping – targeted efforts were made to reach individuals who may face barriers to participation. Surveys were completed in person where needed, with support from frontline services such as outreach teams and drop-in centres – helping to bridge any digital exclusion and encourage engagement with online consultation tools.

Recognising the challenges faced by harder-to-reach groups – such as people currently rough sleeping, seeking asylum, and refugees – paper versions of the survey were available via support agencies. Agencies assisted with completion and uploaded responses to the platform, ensuring these voices were included. They were also asked to actively promote the consultation within their premises and among their service users.

A blended approach was adopted to meet both professional and service user access needs. Online meetings via Microsoft Teams were held to maximise attendance, with separate focus groups tailored to different stakeholder groups to ensure relevance and representation. Sessions were recorded and transcribed, allowing those unable to attend to access the discussions. Additional drop-in sessions were offered online to capture one-to-one feedback and accommodate those who missed group sessions, and these were well-attended.

Accessibility features were embedded into digital tools, including browser-based read-aloud functions for sight-impaired users and translation options to support non-English speakers. Support agencies could also provide assistance by reading surveys aloud and recording responses for individuals with visual impairments.

Key findings: Summary of all on-line consultation responses

Key findings from the online consultation are detailed in the *Go Vocal Consultation Responses Summary*. These insights have directly shaped the feedback themes and informed the review of proposed priorities and principles. Where feedback was not incorporated, clear rationale has been provided.

Key findings: Workshops/Focus groups

General agreement

- Support for a cohesive approach to integrate homelessness and rough sleeping strategies
- Agreement that proposed priorities are strong and appropriately high-level
- Broad support for the principles, pending the detail of an action plan

Most significant day-to-day concerns for partners in tackling homelessness and rough sleeping

- Housing affordability
- Housing availability and standards – especially within the private rented sector
- Health inequalities contributing to rough sleeping and homelessness
- Support services and move-on from supported accommodation
- Funding and resources
- Early traumatic experiences contributing to rough sleeping and homelessness
- Safeguarding responses to complex needs

Feedback themes and responses:

Theme	Feedback	Included via...	Rationale (if not included) / further comments
Clarity and communication	Clarify definitions of key terms such as 'decent', 'suitable', and 'sustainable'.	Strategy	-
	Reduce jargon and include a glossary to avoid confusion.	Strategy	-
	Use Plain English to ensure accessibility for the public and service users e.g. 'stakeholder' or 'cross-sector accountability' are words used by professionals, that will not resonate with the public/residents.	Strategy Action Plan	-
	Break down long sentences to highlight key points and use consistent defined terminology (e.g. rough sleeping or sleeping rough and breaking or interrupting cycles).	Strategy Action Plan	-
	Improve phrasing and explanation of priorities, e.g., distinguish between prevention and breaking the cycle of homelessness, explain what intervening early will mean.	Strategy Action Plan	-
	Reconsider the order of priorities (e.g., swap Priority 1 and 3).	-	Priorities are closely interlinked. The order is fluid/interchangeable depending on the customer's journey.
	Clarify the strategic/priority approach when existing support mechanisms or intervention are unsuccessful.	Strategy	-
Implementation and action	Translate priorities into tangible, visible actions.	Action Plan	-
	Ensure real outcomes for customers.	Action Plan	-
	Provide more detail on implementation.	Action Plan	-

Funding and resourcing	Ensure proper resourcing and upfront investment in Council, commissioned, and voluntary sector services.	Strategy	This is dependent on the Council's overall Council Plan and central government decisions and awards.
	Invest in workforce development through training, retention, and career progression across Council delivered, commissioned and voluntary sector services.	Strategy	
	Address the lack of sustainability of short-term commissions and projects.	Strategy	
Systemic and national policy challenges	Address systemic barriers/policy at national level, including challenges related to benefits, immigration status, and eligibility for support.	Strategy Action Plan	This is influenced by national level politics and international socio-economic factors.
	Address structural barriers and market dynamics, including affordability of the private rented sector, poor housing quality, and lack of social housing.	Strategy Action Plan	
Integration with other strategies	Embed homelessness strategy within broader Council and external strategies.	Strategy Action Plan	-
	Establish joint working protocols and strategic alignment with other services and organisations.	Strategy Action Plan	-
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)	Position EDI as a core strategic value alongside respect and dignity.	Strategy	-
	Ensure fair treatment, representation, and opportunities across all priorities.	Strategy	-
	Use inclusive language to reduce stigma and avoid subjugating specific homeless groups.	Strategy Action Plan	-
Action Plan and further consultation	Continue consultation with partners and people with lived experience during action plan development	Action Plan	-
	Ensure the action plan is practical, realistic, and reflective of frontline challenges.	Action Plan	-
	Include clear, measurable actions connected to each principle with mechanisms for accountability/governance.	Action Plan	-

Review of proposed priorities and subsequent changes:

<p>Proposed Priority 1: Intervening early to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping.</p> <p><i>Why it matters:</i> Early intervention reduces homelessness crisis and costs of emergency accommodation. Loss of accommodation negatively impacts families, individuals and communities. When homelessness occurs, time spent in emergency accommodation or sleeping rough must be brief.</p>		
Feedback	Included via...	Rationale (if not included) / further comments
<p>Explicitly recognise hidden homelessness in its definitions and priorities</p> <p>The proposed priority was perceived as too narrow in scope, excluding significant forms of hidden homelessness such as sofa surfing, families staying with friends or relatives, and individuals living in tents, caravans, B&Bs, or overcrowded and unsuitable accommodation. These groups often do not meet statutory and/or crisis thresholds and remain invisible to services, missing out on early intervention and support.</p>	<p>Amendment to priority and description of priority</p> <p>Strategy Action Plan</p>	-
<p>Enable early intervention for those outside statutory or crisis definitions.</p>	<p>Strategy Action Plan</p>	-
<p>Use inclusive language and criteria to ensure visibility and support for vulnerable groups who are experiencing hidden homelessness.</p>	<p>Strategy Action Plan</p>	-
Rationale for change / inclusion:		
<p>Explicitly recognise hidden homelessness in definitions and priorities</p> <p>→ Many individuals experiencing homelessness – such as sofa surfing, families staying with friends, or those in tents, caravans, and B&Bs – are not approaching services to be considered against statutory thresholds and remain invisible. Including these groups ensures the strategy reflects the full scope of homelessness and targets support where it's most needed.</p>		
<p>Enable early intervention for those outside statutory or crisis definitions</p> <p>→ Early support prevents escalation into crisis, reduces long-term harm, and improves outcomes. Recognising non-statutory cases allows services to act sooner and more effectively.</p>		
<p>Use inclusive language and criteria</p> <p>→ Clear, inclusive language ensures vulnerable groups are not excluded due to technical definitions or service thresholds. It promotes equity, transparency, and accessibility across the strategy and action plan.</p>		

Priority amended to:

Priority 1: Intervene early to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping

What: Identify housing problems early, before they turn into a crisis

How: We will work closely with public services and community partners to help people at the first sign of housing instability, and we will find ways for those experiencing hidden homelessness to access services and support.

Why: By acting quickly to help people before they lose their home, we can reduce crisis, avoid long stays in emergency accommodation, with better outcomes for individuals and families.

Proposed Priority 2: Breaking the cycle of homelessness and rough sleeping		
<i>Why it matters:</i> Ending the cycle improves individual and community health and well-being. It interrupts cycles of trauma and creates safer, more inclusive neighbourhoods.		
Feedback	Included via...	Rationale (if not included) / further comments
Recognise domestic abuse as a distinct driver of repeated homelessness , requiring dedicated priority and access to specialist support.	Strategy Action Plan	Not included as a separate priority but will ensure addressed in strategy and action plan as vulnerable group.
Address root causes such as substance misuse and mental health through improved access to rehabilitation and integrated support services. Proposed priority does not sufficiently consider or address the root causes of homelessness, for example illegal substance misuse. Support services for mental health and addiction to substances highlighted as essential, with suggestions for increased access to rehabilitation programmes.	Strategy Action Plan	Rehabilitation programmes are accessed via Public Health which highlights need for collaborative and joined up working in tackling homelessness.
Ensure a range of supported accommodation options , with emphasis on smaller, self-contained units and high-quality supported housing. Emphasis on the importance of temporary and long-term options for people sleeping rough, including more off-the-streets offers and supported housing. View that smaller, self-contained supported housing options are better for people with complex needs who struggle to manage and move-on from larger hostel type environments. Embed trauma-informed approaches and ensure safe, appropriate accommodation. Ensure that all supported housing commissions for people experiencing or at risk of rough sleeping, are well-resourced (to ensure high quality recruitment and retention of staff), regularly reviewed/monitored and held to high standards.	Strategy Action Plan	This is dependent on the Council's overall Council Plan and central government decisions and awards.

<p>Support the provision of practical support for people sleeping rough to aid recovery and employment</p> <p>Suggestion that practical support like showers, clothes, and a postcode for job applications would make it easier for people sleeping rough to access work.</p>	<p>Action Plan</p>	<p>This is dependent on the Council's overall Council Plan and central government decisions and awards.</p>
<p>Respond to street-based behaviours like begging and anti-social activity, that may be linked to rough sleeping, using multi-agency, trauma-informed and compassionate approaches.</p>	<p>Strategy Action Plan</p>	<p>Begging and anti-social behaviour is not always synonymous with rough sleeping but addressing these sometimes-associated behaviours highlights need for collaborative and joined up working in tackling homelessness.</p>

Rationale for change / inclusion:

Recognise domestic abuse as a distinct driver of homelessness

→ Recurring domestic abuse leads to repeated homelessness presentations, especially for families and children. Recognition of this within the strategy ensures timely access to safe accommodation and specialist support, reducing disruption and trauma.

Address root causes such as substance misuse and mental health

→ These are often underlying factors in homelessness. Integrated support and enabling access to rehabilitation are essential for recovery and long-term stability.

Ensure a range of supported accommodation options

→ Smaller, self-contained units are more suitable for individuals with complex needs, offering greater privacy, stability, and potential for successful move-on.

Embed trauma-informed approaches

→ Ensures accommodation and support services are sensitive to the experiences of those affected by trauma, improving engagement and outcomes.

Provide practical support for people sleeping rough

→ Access to basic amenities helps individuals regain dignity and access employment, services, and housing.

Respond to street-based behaviours with compassion

→ Addressing begging and anti-social behaviour through trauma-informed, multi-agency approaches reduces harm and supports recovery, rather than criminalising vulnerability.

Priority amended to:

Priority 2: Break the cycle of homelessness and rough sleeping

What: Help people move on from homelessness for good by recognising that housing alone is not the solution.

How: We will work with public sector and community groups to tackle root causes and reasons for repeat homelessness. We will provide advice and support in ways that our customers can access. We will ask for customer feedback and use this to improve all our services – including supported housing.

Why: Breaking the cycle helps people, especially children, stay healthy and builds safer, more welcoming communities. Listening and learning all the time helps us support people better and make sure everyone feels respected and understood. Helping with connected problems gives people a better chance to recover and stay stable long term.

Proposed Priority 3: Providing access to decent, suitable and sustainable homes		
<i>Why it matters:</i> When people have a permanent home, they have more chance of controlling their lives and finances. They are more likely to access healthcare and keep employment. Their children are better able to attend school and succeed in their education. A settled home reduces the likelihood of recurring homelessness and rough sleeping.		
Feedback	Included via...	Rationale (if not included) / further comments
Use accessible language by replacing “permanent home” with “stable” or “settled” housing.	Amendment to priority and description of priority.	-
Clarify terminology by defining words like “access” clearly to ensure shared understanding across services and communities.	Amendment to priority and description of priority.	-
Emphasise affordability by making affordability a core theme across priorities and principles.	Amendment to principles and description of principles.	-
<p>Support the expansion of affordable housing options via development of social and affordable housing, including council-owned stock and new builds, alongside move-on options from supported housing.</p> <p>Provide more and better long-term housing which is safe and provided without conditions, by prioritising the development and access to social and affordable housing, including council-owned stock and new builds.</p> <p>Increase availability of move-on options from supported housing, especially for people who have previously slept rough for many years.</p>	-	Connect this strategy to the Council’s Housing Strategy responsible for the strategic delivery of new homes and social housing in Reading.
Engage the private rented sector by strengthening regulation, improving standards, and building ethical landlord partnerships through forums and targeted schemes.	Strategy Action Plan	Wider Renter’s Rights Reform implications.

Strengthen regulation and engagement with private landlords to increase private rented sector supply, including improved standards, landlord forums, and developing an ethical/altruistic landlord portfolio.		
Strengthen tenancy sustainment support offer via floating support and practical assistance post-housing.	Action Plan	-
Explore community-led models by considering replicating initiatives like Refugees at Home to unlock altruistic housing offers for people seeking asylum and others in need.	Strategy Action Plan	-
Rationale for change / inclusion:		
<p>Use accessible language → Improves clarity and inclusivity, ensuring the strategy resonates with both professionals and the public, and reflects the varied realities of homelessness and customer journeys.</p> <p>Clarify terminology → Promotes shared understanding across services and communities, reducing misinterpretation and improving service navigation.</p> <p>Emphasise affordability as a core theme → Affordability is a key barrier to housing stability. Embedding it across priorities/principles ensures the strategy addresses both immediate and long-term housing needs.</p> <p>Expand affordable housing options → Developing social housing, alongside move-on options, increases supply and supports sustainable pathways out of homelessness.</p> <p>Increase move-on options from supported housing → Enables progression for individuals with complex needs, especially those with long histories of rough sleeping, reducing reliance on temporary accommodation and ensure vacancies and availability for those who need it next.</p> <p>Engage the private rented sector → Strengthening regulation and building ethical landlord partnerships improves housing quality, expands options, and fosters more inclusive tenancy practices.</p> <p>Strengthen tenancy sustainment support offer → Reduces repeat homelessness and supports long-term stability.</p>		

Explore community-led housing models

→ Initiatives like Refugees at Home demonstrate potential of altruistic housing offers, expanding capacity and community involvement in solutions.

Amended to:

Priority 3: Make sure everyone can access safe, settled, and affordable housing

What: Provide homes that meet both legal standards and personal needs – places where people can live well.

How: We will use new and existing social housing to meet homelessness needs in the best way. We will build stronger partnerships with landlords to increase housing supply. We will make sure everyone can get the right support to find, move into and keep a stable home. We will be creative, but open about the limits on housing choices – like costs, legislation, and what the market can offer – so people understand what is possible and avoid unnecessary frustration.

Why: A home gives people the foundation they need to rebuild their lives, avoid crisis, and recover in the long term. By working creatively and in partnership we can help people access homes that meet our required standards and suit individual need.

Review of proposed principles and subsequent changes:

<p>Proposed principle: Collaborative and joined-up working Improving how we work with other government funded organisations such as hospitals, prisons and the Home Office.</p>		
<p>What is working well</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactive partnership working is helping to prevent homelessness and support recovery. • Improved relationships over the last decade, with voluntary, community, and faith-based organisations are strengthening the local response. • Strong cross-sector collaboration, particularly between housing services and probation, is enabling open, solution-focused communication and effective outcomes. • Effective coordination between the Council and outreach teams in health, substance misuse, and rough sleeping is supporting timely interventions. 		
<p>Feedback and improvements</p>	<p>Included via...</p>	<p>Rationale (if not included) / further comments</p>
<p>Provide clearer examples in the explanation of this principle.</p>	<p>Strategy Action Plan</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>Show how this principle will prevent people from falling through the gaps and provide holistic support.</p>	<p>Action Plan</p>	<p>-</p>
<p>Offer trauma counselling when people are in supported housing, in-reach housing advice to hospital, prison and Home Office accommodation settings and develop stronger prison-to-housing pathways.</p>	<p>Action Plan</p>	<p>Requires strategic buy-in and input from other sector services to deliver on this.</p>
<p>Improve cross-agency communication, including clearer service updates, referral pathways, and information sharing—especially for vulnerable groups.</p>	<p>Strategy Action Plan</p>	<p>Requires strategic buy-in and input from other sector services to deliver on this.</p>
<p>Promote personalised, multi-agency support, with stronger links to adult social care, mental health, and community organisations.</p>	<p>Strategy Action Plan</p>	<p>Requires strategic buy-in and input from other sector services to deliver on this.</p>
<p>Deepen understanding of commissioned services through regular Council engagement, such as site visits or mentorship-style partnerships.</p>	<p>Action Plan</p>	

<p>Establish a purposeful Homelessness Partnership, with a clear purpose beyond networking, ideally led by an independent body, to drive shared projects, co-production, data-informed impact (as a sector collective), and inclusive engagement.</p>	Action Plan	
<p>Explore collaborative, joint commissioning models to reduce competition, foster sector cohesion and promote efficiency.</p>	Strategy Action Plan	Requires strategic buy-in and input from other sector services to deliver on this.
<p>Advocate for structural change, including rent caps and better housing benefit alignment, through engagement with central government</p>	Action Plan	Requires strategic buy-in and input from other sector services to deliver on this.
<p>Rationale for change / inclusion:</p>		
<p>Clarify and illustrate principles with practical examples → Ensures the strategy is understandable and actionable for both professionals and service users, helping prevent individuals from falling through the gaps.</p> <p>Embed trauma-informed support → Recognises the complex experiences of people facing homelessness and ensures services are responsive, compassionate, and tailored to individual needs—especially in high-risk settings like hospitals, prisons, and asylum accommodation.</p> <p>Strengthen multi-agency collaboration → Improves coordination, reduces duplication, and ensures vulnerable groups receive consistent, joined-up support across services.</p> <p>Deepen Council engagement with commissioned services → Builds trust, improves insight into frontline realities, and strengthens partnerships – leading to more informed commissioning and better service delivery.</p> <p>Establish a purposeful Homelessness Partnership → Creates a shared space for strategic alignment, co-production, and collective impact, especially when led independently to ensure impartiality and broad engagement. Shows that the existing Homelessness Forum is not promoted/accessible for some groups.</p> <p>Adopt collaborative commissioning models → Reduces competition between providers, fosters sector cohesion, and promotes best value and innovation in service design and delivery.</p> <p>Advocate for structural reform → Addresses root causes of homelessness by influencing national policy on housing affordability and benefit alignment, ensuring local strategies are not undermined by systemic barriers.</p>		

Principle amended to:

Work together across services to give people better support
 Strong partnerships between the Council, health services, probation, community groups, and national agencies like hospitals, prisons, and the Home Office help prevent homelessness and support recovery. By sharing information, coordinating referrals, and offering joined-up services we can make sure advice and support is tailored to each person’s needs.

Proposed principle: Community, voluntary and faith sector support
 Making our partnerships stronger in supporting the work of local charities and community interest groups.

What is working well

- **Improved relationships** with voluntary, community, and faith-based organisations are strengthening local collaboration and service delivery.
- **High-quality VCFS and commissioned support services** in Reading are recognised and valued, though their effectiveness may be contributing to increased demand from outside the area - highlighting the town’s reputation as a place of strong provision.

Feedback and improvements	Included via...	Rationale (if not included) / further comments
Importance of cross-sector support - including health, substance misuse services, training, and community involvement - as key to helping people move on from homelessness.	Strategy Action Plan	Requires strategic buy-in and input from other sector services to deliver on this.
Close communication gaps between services to improve coordination, reduce duplication, and ensure consistent support – especially for vulnerable groups.	Action Plan	-
Leverage community-led models (e.g. Homes for Ukraine, Refugees at Home) to harness public goodwill and expand housing options.	Action Plan	This is dependent on the Council’s overall Council Plan and central government decisions and awards. Requires strategic buy-in and input from other sector services to deliver on this.

<p>Avoid duplication by mapping existing services and ensuring teams work in alignment toward shared goals. Conduct a service mapping exercise to identify gaps, overlaps, and opportunities for better integration.</p>	Action Plan	-
<p>Secure sustainable funding for VCFS to maintain and strengthen their vital role in homelessness prevention and support.</p>	Action Plan	<p>This is dependent on the Council's overall Council Plan and central government decisions and awards.</p> <p>Requires strategic buy-in and input from other sectors.</p>
<p>Rationale for change / inclusion:</p>		
<p>Cross-sector support is essential for recovery and move-on → Integrating health, substance misuse services, training, and community involvement ensures holistic support, addressing the complex needs of individuals and improving long-term outcomes.</p> <p>Close communication gaps between services → Strengthening coordination reduces duplication, improves efficiency, and ensures vulnerable individuals receive consistent and timely support.</p> <p>Leverage community-led models → Initiatives like Homes for Ukraine and Refugees at Home demonstrate the power of public goodwill and offer scalable, inclusive housing solutions that complement formal systems.</p> <p>Avoid duplication through service mapping → Identifying existing services and gaps ensures resources are used effectively, promotes team alignment, and supports strategic planning.</p> <p>Secure sustainable funding for VCFS → Voluntary and community sector organisations play a critical role in prevention and frontline support. Long-term funding is essential to maintain their capacity, stability, and impact in prevention, outreach and support.</p>		
<p>Principle amended to:</p>		
<p>Work closely with charities, community groups, and faith organisations to support people facing homelessness Local organisations play a vital role in preventing homelessness and helping people recover. We will agree shared values to align service objectives and activities – this will make sure everyone understands what each sector can and can't do. By improving coordination, facilitating access to funding, and learning from community-led models, we can make sure support is joined-up, inclusive, and reaches those who need it most.</p>		

Proposed principle: Customer and stakeholder input Improving how we gather and use feedback from our customers.		
What is working well		
Establishment of a co-production forum in June 2025, along with the exploration of peer mentoring and a co-production framework , reflects a growing commitment to involving people with lived experience in shaping homelessness services in Reading – helping to ensure that support is more relevant, inclusive, and responsive to real needs.		
Feedback and improvements	Included via...	Rationale (if not included) / further comments
Embed genuine co-production from the outset , ensuring people with lived experience help shape services, pathways, and strategic decisions.	Action Plan	-
Ensure strategic oversight includes exposure to lived experience voices , including engagement with key stakeholders like the police and senior decision-makers.	Strategy Action Plan	-
Improve communication and consistency across services around messaging to clients and what they can expect from services	Action Plan	-
Introduce tools like an assessment passport to reduce duplication, minimise trauma, and promote trust and flexibility in support delivery.	Action Plan	-
Map existing services to avoid duplication and ensure customers know what services are available and out there, and teams work in alignment toward shared goals that meet customer needs and service gaps.	Action Plan	-
Rebuild post-COVID community and volunteer networks to strengthen local capacity and engagement and enhance customer involvement and input.	Strategy Action Plan	Requires strategic buy-in and input from other sector services to deliver on this.

Rationale for change / inclusion:

Embed genuine co-production from the outset

→ Involving people with lived experience ensures services and pathways are shaped by real needs, improving relevance, trust, and outcomes.

Ensure strategic oversight includes lived experience voices

→ Engaging key stakeholders (e.g. police, senior decision-makers) with lived experience stories fosters empathy, informs policy, and drives meaningful change.

Improve communication and consistency across services

→ Clear, unified messaging helps clients understand what to expect, reduces confusion, and strengthens trust in the system.

Introduce tools like an assessment passport

→ Reduces duplication and trauma, promotes continuity of care, and encourages collaborative working across agencies.

Map existing services to avoid duplication and align efforts

→ Identifying gaps and overlaps ensures resources are used effectively and services are coordinated around client needs.

Rebuild post-COVID community and volunteer networks

→ Strengthens local capacity, enhances client involvement, and reconnects people with community-led support and opportunities.

Principle amended to:

Listen to people and use their experiences to shape services

People who've experienced homelessness know what works. By involving them from the start, improving communication and feedback, and making services easier to understand and access, we can build trust, reflect real customer journeys, and design services and support that truly meets people's needs.

<p>Proposed principle: Cross-sector accountability Helping people to receive support from multiple services to keep a roof over their head.</p>		
<p>What is working well</p>		
<p>Bringing housing and adult social care into one directorate is starting to improve internal collaboration by fostering better communication, joint decision-making, and more coordinated support for individuals with complex needs.</p>		
<p>Feedback and improvements</p>	<p>Included via...</p>	<p>Rationale (if not included) / further comments</p>
<p>Adopt a whole-system approach treating homelessness as a multi-dimensional issue requiring wraparound support (e.g. mental health, substance misuse, employment pathways). Housing alone is not the solution.</p>	<p>Strategy Action Plan</p>	<p>Requires strategic buy-in and input from other sector services to deliver on this.</p>
<p>Embed systemic collaboration by moving beyond reliance on personal relationships and establishing formal structures for consistent internal and external collaboration.</p>	<p>Strategy Action Plan</p>	<p>Requires strategic buy-in and input from other sector services to deliver on this.</p>
<p>Ensure strategic integration by embedding homelessness into wider strategic agendas (e.g. public health, domestic abuse, education, safeguarding) and aligning action plans across statutory and VCFS sectors.</p>	<p>Strategy Action Plan</p>	<p>Requires strategic buy-in and input from other sector services to deliver on this.</p>
<p>Improve communication and visibility by addressing service disconnects and raising awareness of homelessness across all departments, mirroring public health's cross-strategy visibility 'Health in all Policies' approach.</p>	<p>Strategy Action Plan</p>	<p>Requires strategic buy-in and input from other sector services to deliver on this.</p>
<p>Introduce cross-sector shared accountability mechanisms (e.g. Service Level Agreements, strategic forums like the Integration Board) across housing, adult social care, mental health, and other services.</p>	<p>Action Plan</p>	<p>Requires strategic buy-in and input from other sector services to deliver on this.</p>
<p>Strengthen early Intervention across sector services by linking with early years services (e.g. Children's Social Care) to recognise homelessness as a safeguarding concern and promote early identification and support.</p>	<p>Strategy Action Plan</p>	<p>Requires strategic buy-in and input from other sector services to deliver on this.</p>

<p>Take a balanced approach in supporting public safety concerns and the needs of vulnerable people sleeping rough by combining support and enforcement.</p>	<p>Strategy Action Plan</p>	<p>Requires strategic buy-in and input from other sector services to deliver on this.</p>
<p>Rationale for change / inclusion:</p>		
<p>Adopt a whole-system approach → Recognises that housing alone is not the solution; addressing interconnected needs supports long-term stability and recovery.</p> <p>Embed systemic collaboration → Builds sustainable partnerships and ensures consistent service delivery regardless of individual staff changes.</p> <p>Ensure strategic integration → Promotes joined-up working and ensures homelessness is prioritised across all relevant policy areas.</p> <p>Improve communication and visibility by addressing service disconnects and raising awareness of homelessness across all departments → Fosters shared responsibility and improves coordination, making homelessness everyone’s business.</p> <p>Introduce cross-sector shared accountability mechanisms → Ensures clear roles, responsibilities, and ownership of outcomes across sectors.</p> <p>Strengthen early intervention across sector services by linking with early years services → Prevents crisis by identifying risks early and embedding homelessness awareness into safeguarding frameworks.</p> <p>Take a balanced approach in supporting public safety concerns and the needs of vulnerable people → Addresses community concerns while ensuring compassionate, person-centred responses for those most at risk.</p>		
<p>Principle amended to:</p>		
<p>Make sure everyone knows their role in preventing homelessness, so people get the help they need to stay housed Homelessness isn’t just a housing issue – it’s linked to health, care, safety, and support. We will help other services and sectors understand, and act on, their role in preventing homelessness. A strategic approach will be adopted to ensure consistent outcomes for customers, reducing reliance on informal operational relationships. By joining up services like housing, social care, mental health, community safety, and education, and making everyone responsible for outcomes, we can offer better, more consistent support and stop people falling through gaps in provisions.</p>		

Proposed principle: Innovation Finding new ways to deliver our homelessness services that offer best value for money.		
What is working well		
Positive feedback on Housing First and its principles highlights that this approach is working well by providing stable, person-centred housing that prioritises individual needs without preconditions, fostering trust, recovery, and long-term stability for people with complex and multiple support needs.		
Feedback and improvements	Included via...	Rationale (if not included) / further comments
Address constraints around the capacity to be innovative which are caused by statutory obligations and limited resources to enable more creative and responsive service design.	Action Plan	Requires strategic buy-in and input from other sector services to deliver on this.
Prioritise evidence-based practice , proven approaches and learning from organisations like the Centre for Homelessness Impact and international best practice.	Action Plan	-
Incorporate cross-sector learning, best practice and insights from other local authorities and sectors to strengthen strategy and delivery.	Strategy Action Plan	-
Explore joint/collaborative commissioning with Adult Social Care and Mental Health to deliver integrated, person-centred support.	Strategy Action Plan	Requires strategic buy-in and input from other sector services to deliver on this.
Review application of procurement processes to be more agile in supporting innovation, flexibility, and timely responses to emerging needs.	Action Plan	Requires strategic buy-in and input from other sector services to deliver on this.
Develop self-contained, client-focused housing options rather than large-scale sites that may hinder recovery and move-on.	Action Plan	This is dependent on the Council's overall Council Plan and central government decisions and awards.

<p>Ensure year-round, continuous access to off-the-streets accommodation and support, not limited to seasonal or emergency responses.</p>	Action Plan	This is dependent on the Council's overall Council Plan and central government decisions and awards.
<p>Introduce innovative inclusive accommodation models like "wet hostels" to meet the needs of individuals with ongoing substance use and complex challenges.</p>	Action Plan	Requires strategic buy-in and input from other sector services to deliver on this.
<p>Continue and expand Housing First for people experiencing, or at risk of, rough sleeping</p>	Action Plan	This is dependent on the Council's overall Council Plan and central government decisions and awards.
<p>Rationale for change / inclusion:</p>		
<p>Address innovation constraints caused by statutory obligations and limited resources → Enables more creative and responsive service design to better meet the complex and evolving needs of people experiencing homelessness.</p> <p>Prioritise evidence-based practice and learning from expert organisations and international models → Ensures interventions are grounded in proven effectiveness, improving outcomes and resource efficiency.</p> <p>Incorporate cross-sector learning and best practice from other local authorities and sectors → Strengthens strategic thinking and delivery by building on successful approaches and avoiding duplication of effort.</p> <p>Explore joint commissioning with Adult Social Care and Mental Health services → Supports integrated, person-centred support that reflects the full spectrum of individual needs and reduces service fragmentation.</p> <p>Review procurement processes to support agile and flexible innovation → Facilitates timely responses to emerging needs and removes barriers to implementing new and effective solutions.</p> <p>Develop smaller, self-contained housing options tailored to individual recovery and progression → Provides environments better suited to client needs, reducing disruption and improving move-on outcomes.</p> <p>Ensure year-round access to off-the-streets accommodation and support → Prevents seasonal gaps in provision and promotes stability and continuity in support.</p> <p>Introduce inclusive accommodation models such as "wet hostels" → Meets the needs of individuals with ongoing substance use and complex challenges, reducing barriers to engagement and support.</p>		

Continue and expand Housing First for those experiencing or at risk of rough sleeping

→ Delivers stable housing without preconditions, fostering recovery and long-term stability for people with high support needs.

Principle amended to:

Find new and better ways to support people facing homelessness

We need to be creative and flexible in how we design services, using proven approaches and learning from what works elsewhere. We'll be ready to act quickly when funding or opportunities come up – always focusing on what's best for our customers. By working together across sectors, improving how we fund and commission services, and offering tailored housing and support options, we can make sure services and support meet people's needs in ways that make the best use of our funding.

Proposed principle: Access to services and information

Making sure that housing options and advice are available to everyone, either on-line or in person, and promoting public awareness of homelessness issues.

What is working well

Drop-ins at community hubs that provide accessible, informal opportunities for engagement, helping build trust, increase visibility of services, and connect people to support in familiar local settings.

Feedback and improvements

Included via...

Rationale (if not included) / further comments

Improve public understanding, education and awareness of homelessness services, triggers, and realities through myth-busting and clear messaging. Practical, visible action not policy rhetoric.

Action Plan

-

Build public engagement and trust by increasing transparency and sharing successes with communities and stakeholders and to provide reassurances of action regarding support vulnerable communities and residents.

Action Plan

-

Implement early education and awareness of homelessness e.g. by introducing homelessness education in schools and using case studies to highlight diverse experiences.

Action Plan

Requires strategic buy-in and input from other sector services to deliver on this.

Deliver tailored and inclusive services and support to explicitly include groups such as care leavers, prison leavers, individuals with substance misuse issues, and those experiencing hidden homelessness.	Action Plan	-
Improve stakeholder communication with councillors, MPs, and businesses to ensure regular, proactive updates and consistent messages about homelessness and rough sleeping are provided.	Action Plan	Requires strategic buy-in and input from other sector services to deliver on this.
Manage public and stakeholder expectations of what the Council, services and interventions can achieve and provide by clarifying the scope of feedback and what can realistically be changed. A “You Said, We Did (or Didn’t) approach.	Action Plan	-
Use inclusive messaging - subtle, positive language in communications - especially around asylum and refugee support.	Action Plan	-
Ensure services are accessible and culturally sensitive by addressing language, cultural, and accessibility barriers for refugees, asylum seekers, and other marginalised groups.	Action Plan	-
Communicate clearly and compassionately to improve reach and service visibility, reduce stigma, and ensure non-judgemental approaches.	Action Plan	-

Rationale for change / inclusion:

Improve public understanding, education and awareness of homelessness

→ Builds empathy, manages expectations (e.g., around council housing), and fosters informed public discourse.

Build public engagement and trust

→ Strengthens trust, counters criticism, and demonstrates impact through visible, practical action.

Implement early education and awareness of homelessness

→ Builds long-term understanding and empathy, especially for underrepresented groups.

Deliver tailored and inclusive services and support

→ Ensures services meet the needs of all individuals, not just those in visible crisis.

Improve stakeholder communication

→ Enhances collaboration and ensures consistent messaging across sectors.

Manage public and stakeholder expectations

→ Maintains transparency and avoids frustration among service users and stakeholders.

Use inclusive messaging

→ Promotes compassion and avoids public concern while reinforcing inclusive values.

Ensure services are accessible and culturally sensitive

→ Ensures equitable access to services and tailored support for diverse needs.

Communicate clearly and compassionately

→ Helps people understand available support and feel safe accessing it.

Principle amended to:

Make sure everyone knows what help is available and how to get it

Services should be easy to find and understand – online, in person, and in the community. Clear, inclusive communication helps people access support, reduces stigma, and builds trust. By improving public awareness, tailoring services to different needs, and sharing success stories, we can make sure everyone can access the services they need.

Proposed principle: Data-driven delivery Using the information we collect about Reading residents to understand how best to deliver services.		
What is working well		
Improved data collection and use is helping homelessness and rough sleeping services better understand the needs of people experiencing homelessness , allowing for more targeted support, improved planning, and stronger coordination across teams – ultimately leading to better outcomes and more efficient use of resources.		
Feedback and improvements	Included via...	Rationale (if not included) / further comments
Rename ‘data-driven delivery’ to ‘data and intelligence driven delivery’ or include the word ‘insight’	Strategy	-
Clarify the purpose of data use to avoid public concern Ensure this principle does not incite public concern/perceptions about how their data is being used and any implication that they are under surveillance. Emphasise how data will be used to improve service targeting and customer outcomes.	Strategy Action Plan	-
Share data and performance outcomes with partners and customers to make the Council accountable, foster shared responsibility among agencies and ensure, and show that, resources are being used effectively.	Strategy Action Plan	-
Use data and intelligence to understand pathways into homelessness	Strategy Action Plan	Requires strategic buy-in and input from other sector services to deliver on this.
Increase transparency through the sharing of performance data, including publicly available statistics, to inform service improvement, gaps in service and improve partnership working.	Strategy Action Plan	-

Rationale for change / inclusion

Rename ‘data-driven delivery’ to ‘data and intelligence-driven delivery’ or include the word ‘insight’

→ Reflects a broader, more thoughtful use of information and avoids narrow or technical interpretations.

Clarify the purpose of data use to avoid public concern

→ Emphasises that data will be used to improve service targeting and outcomes, not for surveillance, fostering trust and transparency.

Share data and performance outcomes with partners and customers

→ Enhances accountability, encourages shared responsibility, and demonstrates effective use of resources.

Use data and intelligence to understand pathways into homelessness

→ Supports strategic planning and early intervention by identifying patterns and risk factors, such as safeguarding referrals.

Increase transparency through publicly available performance data

→ Informs service improvement, strengthens partnership working, and builds public confidence in homelessness responses.

Principle amended to:

Use data and insight to improve services and support

By understanding patterns and sharing information, we can better focus our efforts, target support, plan ahead, and make sure services work well for everyone. We’ll use data and information responsibly and transparently – always being clear about how and why we are using it. We will use what we learn from people and services to focus on improving outcomes and making sure resources are used effectively where they’ll make the biggest difference.

Appendix A: On-line Consultation Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to complete this short survey.

Once completed, please:

- **Email this survey to Homelessness.StrategyConsultation@reading.gov.uk; or**
- **Hand this survey in at the Civic Offices on Bridge Street/Fobney Street for the attention of the Rough Sleeping Initiatives Teams; or**
- **Pass this survey to your supporting agency for them to submit**

Your voice matters!

We have proposed some priorities for our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-30 and we would like your views.

Your answers will help us make things better for people at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping in Reading.

Closing date is 10 August 2025.

Please contact Homelessness.StrategyConsultation@reading.gov.uk with any queries about this consultation.

Please read our proposed priorities and answer the questions below:

Priority 1: Intervene early to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping

Why it matters: Early intervention reduces homelessness crisis and costs of emergency accommodation. Loss of accommodation negatively impacts families, individuals and communities. When homelessness occurs, time spent in emergency accommodation or sleeping rough must be brief.

Priority 2: Break the cycle of homelessness and rough sleeping

Why it matters: Ending the cycle improves individual and community health and well-being. It interrupts cycles of trauma and creates safer, more inclusive neighbourhoods.

Priority 3: Increase access to decent, suitable and sustainable accommodation

Why it matters: When people have a permanent home, they have more chance of controlling their lives and finances. They are more likely to access healthcare and keep employment. Their children are better able to attend school and succeed in their education. A settled home reduces the likelihood of recurring homelessness and rough sleeping.

1. Are the proposed priorities for the strategy clear?

**Only choose one option.*

- Yes
- No
- This question is not clear / I prefer not to say

2. If your answer to the question above was 'no' please tell us why.
(optional)

3. Do you agree or disagree that the proposed priorities above are important?

For each row, mark one circle with a cross to indicate your preference.

	Agree	Disagree	I don't know / I prefer not to say
Intervening early to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Breaking the cycle of homelessness and rough sleeping	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing access to decent, suitable and sustainable homes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Please rate how well the Council currently delivers homelessness and rough sleeping services, against our proposed priorities:

For each row, mark one circle with a cross to indicate your preference.

	Exceptional	Satisfactory	Neutral	Unsatisfactory	Unacceptable	Prefer not to say
Intervening early to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping	<input type="radio"/>					
Breaking the cycle of homelessness and rough sleeping	<input type="radio"/>					
Providing access to decent, suitable and sustainable homes	<input type="radio"/>					

5. How can we deliver better services for people who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness and rough sleeping? (optional)

6. Please select the three principles that are most important to you.

To guide us in how we should deliver our proposed priorities, we have set out some principles:

Collaborative and joined-up working - improving how we work with other government funded organisations such as hospitals, prisons and the Home Office.

Community, voluntary and faith sector support - making our partnerships stronger in supporting the work of local charities and community interest groups.

Customer and stakeholder input - improving how we gather and use feedback from our customers.

Cross-sector accountability - helping people to receive support from multiple services to keep a roof over their head.

Innovation - finding new ways to deliver our homelessness services that offer best value for money.

Access to services and information - making sure that housing options and advice are available to everyone, either on-line or in person, and promoting public awareness of homelessness issues.

Data-driven delivery - using the information we collect about Reading residents to understand how best to deliver services.

**Choose exactly 3 options*

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborative and joined-up working | <input type="checkbox"/> Community and voluntary sector support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Customer and stakeholder input | <input type="checkbox"/> Cross-sector accountability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Innovation | <input type="checkbox"/> Access to services and information |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Data-driven delivery | |

7. Why do you feel these principles are the most important? (optional)

8. Are there any other principles you think we should include? (optional)

9. What would you like to see the Council focus on in tackling rough sleeping and homelessness? (optional)

10. Are you responding as a:

**Only choose one option.*

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Member of the Public who has not experienced homelessness | <input type="radio"/> Member of the Public who has rough slept / is rough sleeping |
| <input type="radio"/> Member of the Public who has been homeless / is homeless (excluding rough sleeping) | <input type="radio"/> Voluntary, Community or Faith sector organisation |
| <input type="radio"/> Homelessness sector service provider (Council commissioned) | <input type="radio"/> Homelessness sector service provider (non-Council commissioned) |
| <input type="radio"/> Other Public Sector organisation (e.g. Adult Social Care, Public Health, Police, Probation, NHS) | <input type="radio"/> Housing Association / Registered Provider |
| <input type="radio"/> Local business | <input type="radio"/> Landlord or emergency accommodation provider |
| <input type="radio"/> Other | |

About you

11. What is your age?

**Only choose one option.*

- 16 – 24
- 25 – 34
- 35 – 44

- 45 – 54
- 55 – 64
- 65 – 74
- 75+
- Prefer not to say

12. What is your sex?

**Only choose one option.*

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

13. Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

**Only choose one option.*

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

14. What is your ethnic group?

**Only choose one option.*

- Asian or Asian British
- Black, Black British, Caribbean or African
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups
- White
- Any other ethnic group
- Prefer not to say

15. Do you have a disability?

A disability is defined in the Equality Act as a physical or mental health condition or illness that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.

**Only choose one option.*

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Thank you for contributing to this survey about Reading's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 - 30.

If you are currently experiencing rough sleeping or have concerns about someone who is, please refer yourself, or them, to the rough sleeping outreach team using www.thestreetlink.org.uk.

Alternatively, you can approach or refer someone to the Council's Homelessness Prevention Service at the Civic Centre on Bridge Street during opening hours, or to call the team on 0118 937 2165 or 01344 351 999 in an out of hours emergency after 5pm or at weekends.

Appendix B: Consultation materials

Email signature with link to consultation:



Poster for promoting consultation:

A poster with a purple header and footer. The header contains the Reading Borough Council logo and the text "Reading Borough Council Working better with you". The main content area is white and contains the following text:

Share your views on tackling homelessness and rough sleeping in Reading

Your input will shape how we address homelessness and rough sleeping in Reading over the next five years.

Our proposed priorities are:

- Priority 1:** Intervene early to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping
- Priority 2:** Break the cycle of homelessness and rough sleeping
- Priority 3:** Increase access to decent, suitable and sustainable accommodation

Complete this short survey at: <https://reading.govocal.com/en-GB/projects/homelessness-rough-sleeping>

Below the text is a QR code in a black box with the text "Scan me!" underneath it. To the right of the QR code is a circular word cloud containing the words "rough sleeping", "homelessness", and "priorities". Below the word cloud is the text "Have your say".

Closing date: 10 August 2025

Contact us on Homelessness.StrategyConsultation@reading.gov.uk with any queries.

Workshop/focus group format and slides:



Have your say!
Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-30

Emma Tytel – Rent Guarantee Scheme Manager
Verena Hutcheson – Rough Sleeping Initiatives Manager

 Reading Borough Council
Working better with you

Welcome: Session aim and agenda

Aim

For you, as valued stakeholders, to discuss and give your views on how we tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in Reading over the next five years.

Agenda

- **Introductions**
- **Why consult?**
- **Breakout Session 1:** Proposed priorities – what we will do
 - Regroup to feedback themes
 - Chat check
- **Breakout Session 2:** Proposed principles – how we will do it
 - Regroup to feedback themes
 - Chat check
- **Summary and close**



Welcome: Session aims and agenda

Breakout **facilitators will take notes and feedback** on the themes of these sessions.

Main Teams room session **will be recorded** to ensure all feedback can be accurately recalled and recorded.

Please be **open and honest** in your opinions, but **considerate of others** when voicing them.

Let us know what you are most concerned about day-to-day when tackling homelessness and rough sleeping [**word cloud in chat – open throughout**]



Introductions

Please introduce yourself:

- Your name
- Your organisation and your sector

Then...

- Hand over to someone else on the Teams call



Why consult?

- At least every five years all local authorities have a duty to review homelessness in their area and publish a strategy that outlines how we intend to tackle and prevent homelessness.
- Rough Sleeping Strategy expired 2024 and Homelessness Strategy expires 2025 (statutory requirement)

We must:

- Undertake a needs analysis to inform the strategy
- Review and publish the previous strategies outcomes
- Consult with customers and stakeholders on proposed priorities/strategic direction and publish findings
- Undertake an Equality Impact Assessment
- Publish an Action Plan and provide updates, at least annually



Why consult?

We are taking the opportunity to:

- Combine the two strategies
- Use feedback from MHCLG diagnostic outcomes (2023) and Rough Sleeping Deep Dive outcomes (2025)

Find out from you what you think about existing services and what we can do better to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in Reading!



Proposed Priorities – what we will do

Priority	Why it matters
Priority 1: Intervene early to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping	Early intervention reduces homelessness crisis and costs of emergency accommodation. Loss of accommodation negatively impacts families, individuals and communities. When homelessness occurs, time spent in emergency accommodation or sleeping rough must be brief.
Priority 2: Break the cycle of homelessness and rough sleeping	Ending the cycle improves individual and community health and well-being. It interrupts cycles of trauma and creates safer, more inclusive neighbourhoods.
Priority 3: Increase access to decent, suitable and sustainable accommodation	When people have a permanent home, they have more chance of controlling their lives and finances. They are more likely to access healthcare and keep employment. Their children are better able to attend school and succeed in their education. A settled home reduces the likelihood of recurring homelessness and rough sleeping.

Breakout session 1: Priorities

Breakout Session 1 - Priorities

Please spend 20 minutes in your group discussing:

- If you agree with the proposed priorities?
- Are we missing any priorities?
- What would you like to see the Council focus on strategically in tackling homelessness and rough sleeping?

Your group facilitator will make themselves known, take notes and feedback three key points for each question on behalf of your group.

We will copy/paste the questions and priorities into your breakout chat for reference.



Breakout session 1: Re-group and feedback



Proposed Principles – how we will do it

Principle	For example, by
Collaborative and joined-up working	Improving how we work with other government funded organisations such as hospitals, prisons and the Home Office.
Community, voluntary and faith sector support	Making our partnerships stronger in supporting the work of local charities and community interest groups.
Customer and stakeholder input	Improving how we gather and use feedback from our customers.
Cross-sector accountability	Helping people to receive support from multiple services to keep a roof over their head.
Innovation	Finding new ways to deliver our homelessness services that offer best value for money.
Access to services and information	Making sure that housing options and advice are available to everyone, either on-line or in person, and promoting public awareness of homelessness issues.
Data-driven delivery	Using the information we collect about Reading residents to understand how best to deliver services.




Breakout session 2: Principles



Breakout Session 2 - Principles

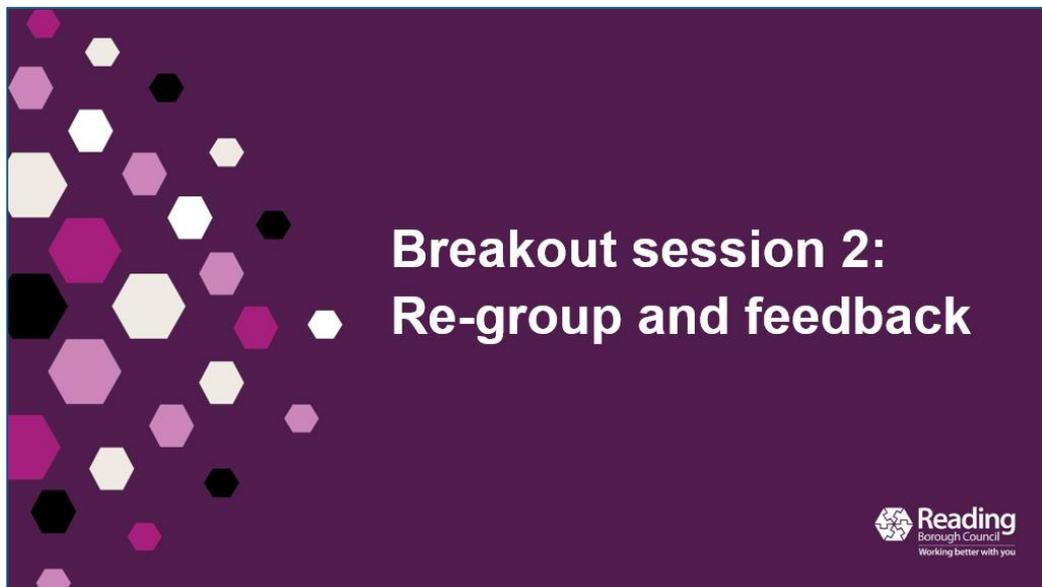
Please spend 20 minutes in your group discussing:

- If you agree with our guiding principles?
- Are we missing any principles?

- How well does the Council currently deliver its operational homelessness and rough sleeping services?
 - What works?
 - How can we do better?

Your group facilitator will make themselves known, take notes and feedback three key points for each question on behalf of your group.

We will copy/paste the questions and principles into your breakout chat for reference.



Summary and close

Thank you for your time and honesty – it genuinely helps us.

Next steps for us:

- Consultation closes 10 August 2025
- Feedback to be shared during September 2025
- Intending to take draft strategy to Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee in November 2025

Please complete a survey yourself and share the link with your teams:

<https://reading.govocal.com/en-GB/projects/homelessness-rough-sleeping>

Any questions or requests for a printable/hard copy of the survey, please email

Homelessness.StrategyConsultation@reading.gov.uk



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Share your views on how we should tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in Reading: Consultation results and outcome

This survey was open on the Go Vocal platform between 2nd July and 10th August 2025.

The responses from 80 participants were directly recorded or uploaded from paper copies submitted.

A summary of all responses submitted is provided and themes identified are outlined.

Are the proposed priorities for the strategy clear?

80/80 - Multiple choice - choose one - required



The majority of respondents **agreed with the proposed priorities**. However, there were some strong **suggestions for improvement including how they are phrased, explained and what needs to be carried through to the strategy's ongoing action plan** to ensure these priorities are more than just words on a page. This will be reflected in the final priorities and strategy.

If the answer to the question above was 'no' please tell us why:

A number of respondents expressed **concern over the lack of clarity and detail** within some of the proposed priorities — **particularly Priority 2**. Many felt it was **difficult to discern what tangible actions** would be taken, and there was some **confusion around the distinction between preventing homelessness and breaking the cycle of homelessness**. This ambiguity led some to view the proposed **priorities as too broad** or lacking in focus.

A recurring theme was the perception that the strategy **does not sufficiently address the root causes of homelessness**. Issues such as substance misuse — especially illegal substances — were frequently cited as being underrepresented. Additionally, several respondents felt the **scope of priorities was too narrow, with limited attention given to forms of hidden homelessness**, including sofa surfing and families in temporary or insecure accommodation.

Concerns were also raised about the **feasibility and nature of early intervention**. Respondents sought greater **clarity on what early intervention would entail** and how it would be implemented in practice, including where existing support mechanisms or interventions are unsuccessful.

While a few respondents proposed reordering the priorities, the most consistent feedback was a call for **greater specificity, clearer action plans, and a more inclusive approach that reflects the diverse realities and drivers of homelessness**.

Do you agree or disagree that the proposed priorities above are important?

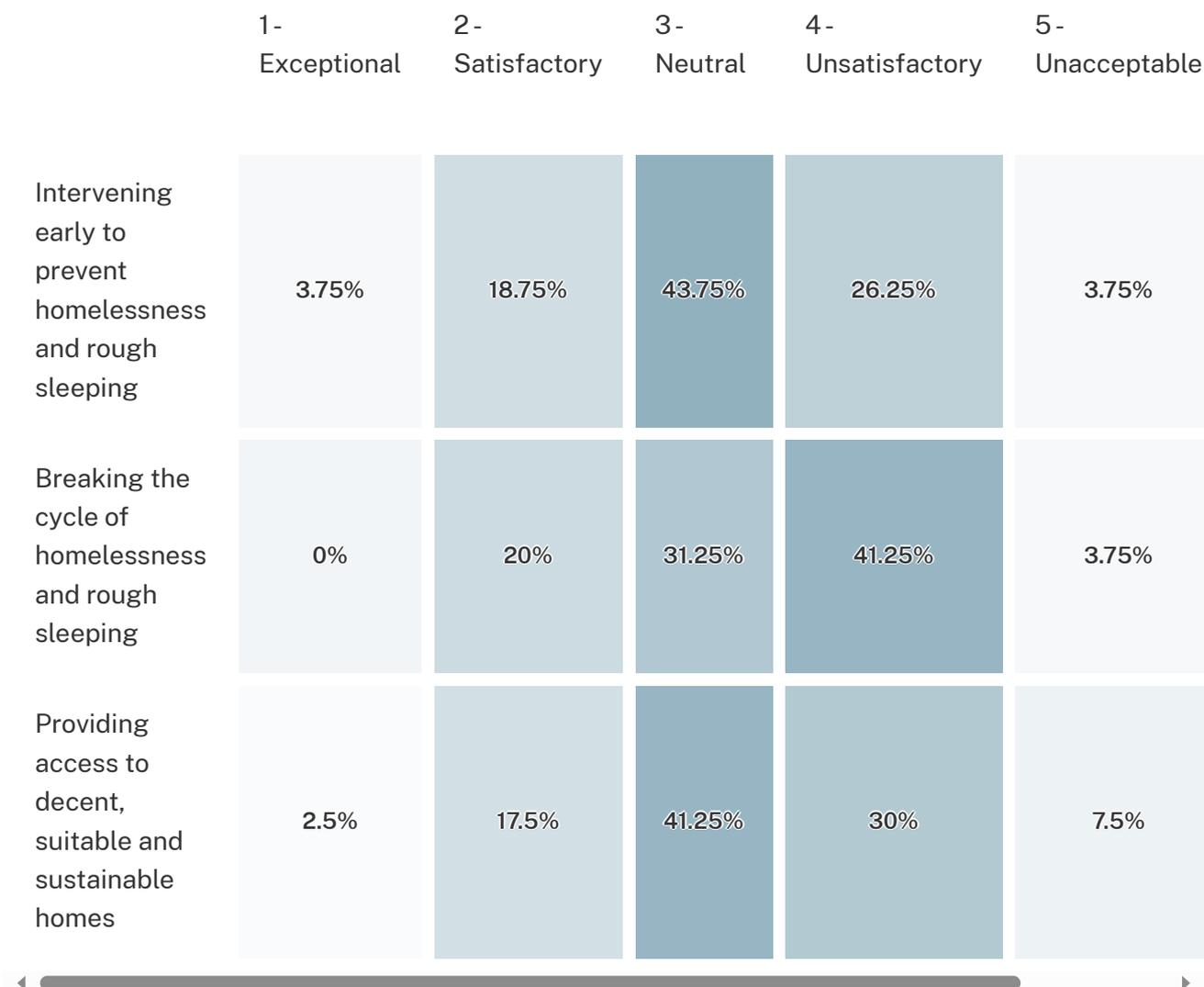
80/80 - Matrix - required

	1- Agree	2- Disagree	3- I don't know / I prefer not to say
Intervening early to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping	96.25%	2.5%	1.25%
Breaking the cycle of homelessness and rough sleeping	95%	2.5%	2.5%
Providing access to decent, suitable and sustainable homes	93.75%	3.75%	2.5%

Most respondents **agreed with the importance of the proposed priorities** therefore they will be **included in the final strategy.**

Please rate how well the Council currently delivers homelessness and rough sleeping services, against our proposed priorities:

80/80 - Matrix - required



Feedback on the Council’s current performance across the three strategic priorities was mixed. Around one in five respondents felt that service delivery was at least satisfactory, indicating **some confidence in existing efforts**. However, a significant proportion – 40% of respondents – provided neutral feedback, which may suggest uncertainty or a **lack of awareness about what the Council is currently doing in these areas**.

One-third of respondents felt that the Council’s **delivery on early intervention and access to housing was unsatisfactory or unacceptable**. This figure was nearly half when considering the priority of **breaking the cycle of homelessness and rough sleeping – highlighting a clear area for improvement**.

These findings show the importance of **strengthening delivery** across all three priorities. They also point to a need for **greater transparency and clearer communication about the Council’s actions and impact**. Ensuring that residents and stakeholders understand not only **what is being done, but how and why**, will be essential over the next five years.

How can we deliver better services for people who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness and rough sleeping?

Respondents consistently emphasised that **housing alone is not a solution**. Instead, they advocated for **wraparound support** — including **mental health services, substance misuse treatment, and pathways into employment** — to ensure long-term stability and recovery.

Feedback from respondents showed a **consensus for increased access to affordable and long-term housing, especially social housing**. There was support for **more off-the-streets accommodation** and shelters, alongside **more innovative housing solutions** such as ‘wet hostels’ that accommodate individuals with complex needs and ongoing substance use issues.

Operational improvements were also a recurring theme. Many respondents highlighted **the need to reduce waiting times for support and improve communication with those seeking help**.

Suggestions included **more visible outreach**, such as visiting known rough sleeping sites and proactively engaging with people at risk, as well as **public awareness campaigns** to clarify available services and how to access them.

The importance of **multi-agency collaboration** was frequently raised, with the suggestion of more personalised approaches that bring together local authorities, charities, health services, and community organisations. **Prevention was seen as a cornerstone of effective strategy** — identifying and supporting individuals **before they reach crisis point**.

Concerns around drug and alcohol use among people sleeping rough were common. Views varied, with some advocating for stricter enforcement and others urging a more compassionate, treatment-focused response. These concerns were often linked to broader issues of anti-social behaviour and public safety, particularly in areas with visible rough sleeping.

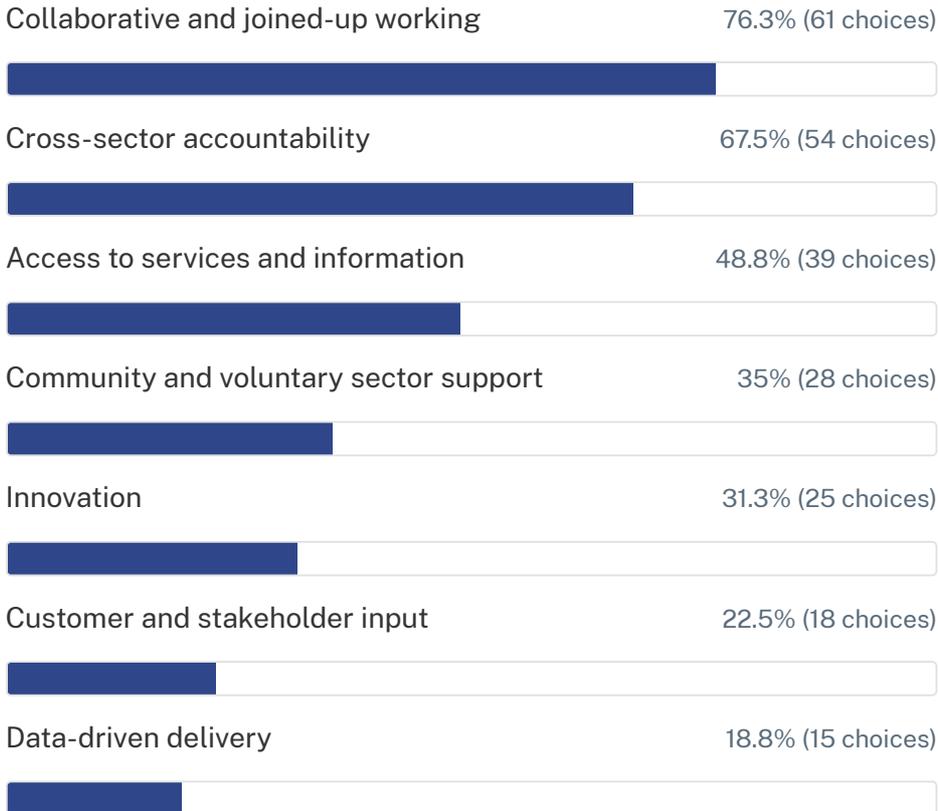
Respondents also pointed to systemic barriers, including **challenges related to benefits, immigration status, and eligibility for support** — especially for single individuals or those with limited access to public funds. Policy suggestions included rent caps, better alignment between housing benefit and actual rents, and **stronger regulation of the private rented sector**.

While a minority expressed frustration about perceived misuse of services or prioritisation of certain groups, others emphasised the need for compassionate responses.

It was clear that respondents want **practical, visible action over policy rhetoric**, with some expressing frustration at slow progress and a lack of tangible outcomes.

Please select the three principles that are most important to you.

80/80 - Multiple choice - choose many - required



Why do you feel these principles are the most important?

Respondents most frequently emphasised the **importance of collaborative, joined-up working across services and sectors** to prevent people from falling through the cracks and to provide holistic support. Many noted that people experiencing homelessness often do not know what support is available or struggle to access it, so **better information sharing and co-ordination is needed**.

Data-driven approaches and **listening to service users** were also highlighted as crucial for **understanding needs** and **ensuring resources are used effectively**. Several respondents stressed the need for **accountability and shared responsibility among agencies**.

Some called for **innovation** and **flexibility to address complex needs** while others argued for **consistency and proper funding** for proven projects **rather than constant change**. The importance of **cross-sector support** – including health, substance misuse services, training, and community involvement – was mentioned as key to helping people move on from homelessness.

A few responses highlighted that **visible rough sleeping and begging remains an issue** in Reading.

Overall, the dominant themes were the need for **better collaboration, improved information sharing, data-driven decision making, and holistic support** that addresses the full range of needs faced by people experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping.

Are there any other principles you think we should include?

Mental health support was highlighted as key by several respondents. Many emphasised the importance of **prevention and early intervention** as well as **proper resourcing and upfront investment**, with some reference to **adopting international best practice** in tackling rough sleeping.

A recurring theme was the need for **more social and affordable housing**, including **building more homes** and offering **more social housing in new developments**. Respondents also suggested that **practical support** like showers, clothes, and a postcode for job applications would make it easier **for people sleeping rough to access work**.

Some respondents felt that **data-driven, results-oriented action** is important. There were also calls for **innovation, community and voluntary sector involvement**, and **easier access to services and information**.

Giving homeless individuals a voice in the process was seen as essential, with suggestions to consult directly with those affected about their needs. **Compassion, integrity, and respect** were also mentioned as essential values.

Some respondents raised **concerns about visible encampments in public spaces** and suggested enforcement or alternative approaches for those refusing help and support. There was mention of prioritising support for UK Nationals, though this was not a widely shared view.

A few noted that Reading's **strong support services may attract rough sleeping** from elsewhere, suggesting the town is a "victim of its own success".

What would you like to see the Council focus on in tackling rough sleeping and homelessness?

The most common theme across responses was the need for **more and better accommodation**, including council-owned social housing, affordable homes and safe accommodation without conditions.

Additional suggestions include **improving landlord standards of practice in the private rented sector** to prevent homelessness.

Many respondents expressed the need for **more visible, accessible, and compassionate support services**, including **better outreach, improved communication from council officers, and non-judgemental approaches**. Some mentioned the importance of **tailored approaches for specific groups** such as women and those experiencing hidden homelessness.

Several respondents specifically mentioned the importance of both **temporary and long-term options for people sleeping rough**, including off-the-streets offers and supported housing. A number of responses focused on **addressing persistent begging and anti-social behaviour** linked to rough sleeping. **Support services for mental health and addiction to substances** were frequently highlighted as essential, with suggestions for **increased access to rehabilitation programmes**.

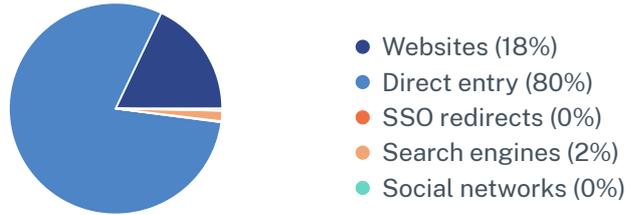
Are you responding as a:

80/80 - Multiple choice - choose one - required

Member of the Public who has not experienced homelessness	53.8% (43 choices)
Other Public Sector organisation (e.g. Adult Social Care, Public Health, Police, Probation, NHS)	10% (8 choices)
Member of the Public who has been homeless / is homeless (excluding rough sleeping)	6.3% (5 choices)
Homelessness sector service provider (Council commissioned)	6.3% (5 choices)
Voluntary, Community or Faith sector organisation	5% (4 choices)
Local business	3.8% (3 choices)
Member of the Public who has rough slept / is rough sleeping	2.5% (2 choices)
Landlord or emergency accommodation provider	2.5% (2 choices)
Homelessness sector service provider (non-Council commissioned)	1.3% (1 choice)
Housing Association / Registered Provider	0% (0 choices)
Other	8.8% (7 choices)

10% of respondents stated they had lived experience of rough sleeping, with just over half of respondents having not experienced homelessness. A quarter of respondents were professionals and volunteers involved in the provision of public services, directly or indirectly supporting homelessness.

How people accessed the survey



What is your age?



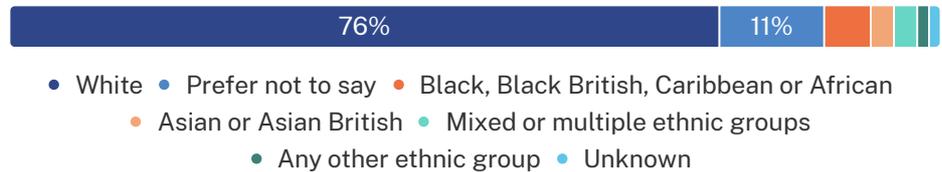
What is your sex?



Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?



What is your ethnic group?



Do you have a disability?



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed:

Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping: A strategy for Reading 2026-31 and accompanying action plan

Directorate: DCASC
Service: Housing Needs

Name: Verena Hutcheson / Emma Tytel
Job Title: Rough Sleeping Initiatives Manager / Rent Guarantee Scheme Manager

Date of assessment: 18th September 2025

Version History

Version	Reason	Author	Date	Approved By
1	For draft strategy going to HNL Committee on 10/03/26	ET / VH	19/09/25	Sarah Hennessy

Scope your proposal

What is the aim of your policy or new service/what changes are you proposing?

Under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended in 2002) and associated statutory Homelessness Code of Guidance all local authorities are legally obliged to have a homelessness strategy. At least every five years each authority should undertake a review of homelessness in their area, conduct a consultation, and then use the results from both to inform their homelessness strategy, including the formulation of key priorities and an action plan. The action plan should be developed to ensure that the strategy's objectives are achieved. Both the homelessness strategy and action plan should have regard to Government's Homelessness Code of Guidance, and it should be made publicly available.

All local authorities in receipt of funding from the MHCLG for rough sleeping services should, in accordance with good practice, have a local rough sleeping strategy in place. The decision has been made to combine the two strategies for 2026-31 and therefore, the proposed priorities for both were consulted on simultaneously.

Who will benefit from this proposal and how?

Aside from legal requirement, an effective homelessness and rough sleeping strategy ensures that Reading has a robust plan, is accountable for its response to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness (including those groups most vulnerable to homelessness) and that the Council understands, regularly revisits and reviews need. This includes causes of homelessness and rough sleeping, what has been achieved and any new priorities that should be introduced.

The resulting strategy will benefit those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including those who are rough sleeping.

What outcomes does the change aim to achieve and for whom?

The drafted strategic priorities for 2026-31 are as follows:

Priority 1: Intervene early to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping.

What: Identify housing problems early, before they turn into a crisis

How: We will work closely with public services and community partners to help people at the first sign of housing instability, and we will find ways for those experiencing hidden homelessness to access services and support.

Why: By acting quickly to help people before they lose their home, we can reduce crisis, avoid long stays in emergency accommodation, with better outcomes for individuals and families.

Priority 2: Break the cycle of homelessness and rough sleeping.

What: Help people move on from homelessness for good by recognising that housing alone is not the solution.

How: We will work with public sector and community groups to tackle root causes and reasons for repeat homelessness. We will provide advice and support in ways that our customers can access. We will ask for customer feedback and use this to improve all our services - including supported housing.

Why: Breaking the cycle helps people, especially children, stay healthy and builds safer, more welcoming communities. Listening and learning all the time helps us support people better and make sure everyone feels respected and understood. Helping with connected problems gives people a better chance to recover and stay stable long term.

Priority 3: Make sure everyone can access safe, settled, and affordable housing.

What: Provide homes that meet both legal standards and personal needs - places where people can live well.

How: We will use new and existing social housing to meet homelessness needs in the best way. We will build stronger partnerships with landlords to increase housing supply. We will make sure everyone can get the right support to find, move into, and keep a stable home. We will be creative, but open about the limits on housing choices - like costs, legislation, and what the market can offer - so people understand what is possible and avoid unnecessary frustration.

In line with the stated priorities, Reading's Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 - 31 aims to intervene at the earliest opportunity to prevent any single person, couple or household in the borough from becoming homeless, where risk has been identified, or relieve homelessness or rough sleeping when it ensues.

Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?

Customers of the Homelessness Prevention Service, including those who are homeless and at risk of homelessness, who want to receive a service that prevents or relieves their homelessness.

Wider communities and residents who want to be able to identify and prevent homelessness crisis and therefore reduce/eliminate the need for council intervention and/or emergency accommodation.

How does your proposal relate to eliminating discrimination; advancing equality of opportunity; promoting good community relations?

The Strategy is underpinned by a Needs Analysis (Appendix 5) which identifies the primary reasons for homelessness in Reading and has an accompanying Action Plan identifying how the Council plans to address these.

Of those households approaching the Service between April 2020 - March 2025 as homeless, or at risk of homelessness, the primary reasons for homelessness disproportionately affect certain equality groups (addressed under each group of this EqlA).

Reading’s overall strategic response for homelessness is to identify those most at risk of homelessness and then ensure that positive and targeted interventions are undertaken to meet the needs of these groups. Interventions include improving communications, engaging with partners, and developing direct responses to reduce inequalities regarding accessing and benefitting from the Service.

Assess whether an EqlA is Relevant

Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some groups may be affected differently than others (due to race, disability, sex, gender, sexuality, age, religious belief or due to belonging to the Armed Forces community or care experience)? Refer to the known demographic profile of the service user group, your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc.

Yes

Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Refer to your complaints, consultation, feedback, media reports locally/nationally.

Yes

If the answer is **Yes** to any of the above, you need to do an Equality Impact Assessment.

If **No** you **MUST** complete this statement.

An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant because: Not applicable.

X

Completing Officer

X

Lead Officer

Assess the Impact of the Proposal

Your assessment must include:

- **Consultation**
- **Collection and Assessment of Data**
- **Judgement about whether the impact is negative or positive.**

Think about who does and does not use the service? Is the take up representative of the community? What do different minority groups think? (You might think your policy; project or service is accessible and addressing the needs of these groups but asking them might give you a different view). Does it really meet their varied needs? Are some groups less likely to get a good service?

How do your proposals relate to other services - will your proposals have knock on effects on other services elsewhere? Are there proposals being made for other services that relate to yours and could lead to a cumulative impact?

Example: A local authority takes separate decisions to limit the eligibility criteria for community care services; increase charges for respite services; scale back its accessible housing programme; and cut concessionary travel.

Each separate decision may have a significant effect on the lives of disabled residents, and the cumulative impact of these decisions may be considerable.

This combined impact would not be apparent if decisions are considered in isolation.

Consultation

How have you consulted with or do you plan to consult with relevant groups and experts. If you have not already completed a Consultation form do it now. The checklist helps you make sure you follow good consultation practice.

[Consultation manager form - Reading Borough Council Dash](#)

Relevant groups/experts	How were/will the views of these groups be obtained	Date when contacted
General public, businesses, university students, sector partners and internal staff	Online Survey via RBC's consultation platform, Go Vocal (open public consultation)	Survey open 2 nd July - 10 th August 2025

<p>Single people and families living in Homelessness Support Services, emergency accommodation, temporary accommodation.</p>	<p>People who have lived experience of homelessness supported by staff to complete the online consultation survey, or a paper copy of the survey which is then uploaded.</p>	<p>Survey open 2nd July - 10th August 2025</p>
<p>General public, businesses, university students, internal staff and those affected by homelessness</p>	<p>Use of social media (Facebook and Twitter), RBC internal communications (Intranet and staff newsletter) and local media (leader column in Reading Chronicle and Reading Today) to provide an information piece and promote the online survey</p>	<p>Survey open 2nd July - 10th August 2025</p>
<p>Statutory, charity and community led services who are supporting or providing a service to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness</p>	<p>Cross-sector focus groups with informed and experienced partners</p>	<p>Six online focus groups held between 9th July and 7th August.</p>

Collect and assess your data

Using information from Census, residents survey data, service monitoring data, satisfaction or complaints, feedback, consultation, research, your knowledge, and the knowledge of people in your team, staff groups etc. describe how the proposal could impact on each group. Include both positive and negative impacts.

Describe how this proposal could impact on racial groups (including nationality and refugee and asylum groups)

Is there a negative impact? No

The proposed homelessness and rough sleeping strategy is expected to have a positive impact on individuals from all ethnic backgrounds, with a commitment to equity, cultural responsiveness, and inclusive service design.

Data collated from customers owed a homelessness duty (prevention or relief) between April 2020 - March 2025, who have chosen to divulge their ethnicity, has been compared to Census information from 2021, providing an update on the 2011 Census.

Between 2011 and 2021, Reading saw a notable increase in ethnic diversity, with the proportion of residents identifying as "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh" rising from 13.6% to 17.7%. Those identifying as "White" declined from 74.8% to 67.1%, and small increases were seen in people identifying as "Black" and "Mixed or Multiple" ethnic groups. In Reading, since 2020, the ethnicity of individuals owed a prevention or relief duty has mirrored the Census findings, with the proportion of accepted duties owed to those identifying as "Asian or Asian British" having doubled to 16% in 2024/5. The proportion of accepted duties owed to those who identify as "Black, African, Caribbean or Black British" has increased from 12% to 17% and the proportion of those from "other ethnic groups" has increased from 1% to 5%. Accepted duties among those identifying as "White" dropped from 63% to 49%. The fact that the number of accepted duties among those identifying as "Asian or Asian British" has increased to a greater extent than Reading's population, during the same time period, may be explained by patterns of migration from areas of global conflict, with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers being proportionally more likely to require assistance with housing and to qualify for a housing duty. Residents who identify as "Black, African, Caribbean or Black British" are over-represented in the proportion of duties accepted, and this figure is becoming increasingly disproportionate over time.

In Reading, available data on rough sleeping captures nationality, rather than ethnicity of those verified. Autumn 2023 and 2024 annual rough sleeping snapshot data show consistency, at 46% and 47% respectively, in the proportion of EU and non-EU nationals verified on that night, compared to those with a UK or unknown nationality. This shows an overrepresentation of people from EU and non-EU countries sleeping rough in Reading who predominantly do not have access to public funds, compared to the overall population in Reading, which according to Census 2021 data is 64.2% of people reporting the UK as their country of birth.

Nationally, locally and against comparative local authorities, the number of those having left National Asylum Support Services (NASS) within the last 85 days, with a positive immigration status outcome, and verified sleeping rough across 2023 and 2024 has steadily reduced. This was following a peak nationally and locally in December 2023/January 2024. This is due to targeted prevention activity for this group and because the Home Office extended the NASS accommodation move-on period from 28 to 56 days in December 2024 to reduce homelessness among newly granted refugees. However, this change was reversed in August 2025, returning the notice period to 28 days which is likely to increase homelessness and rough sleeping among newly granted refugees by limiting their time to secure housing and support.

While consultation did not highlight specific concerns about ethnicity, the strategy recognises the importance of proactive inclusion. The Action Plan includes measures to improve data capture on ethnicity and nationality across all service points, provide multilingual resources and interpretation services to improve access, engage with diverse communities to co-design services, ensure staff are trained in cultural competence and anti-racist practice and strengthen partnerships with the Home Office and refugee support organisations to enable earlier intervention for asylum seekers and migrants leaving National Asylum Support Services (NASS). This approach ensures services are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the needs of Reading's increasingly diverse population.

Describe how this proposal could impact on Sex and Gender identity (include pregnancy and maternity, marriage, gender re-assignment)

Is there a negative impact? No

The proposed homelessness and rough sleeping strategy is expected to have a positive impact on individuals of all sex and gender identities, with a commitment to inclusive service delivery and improved data capture.

The Census 2021 question on gender identity was voluntary and asked of those aged 16 years and over. The question asked was "Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?" Across England and Wales, 6% of respondents declined to answer the question and 0.5% answered "No". 0.46% of respondents in London reported that the gender they identified with was different from their sex registered at birth, and 0.18% of respondents in the South East reported the same. Specific data is not available for Reading.

While data is only available for 2024/25, half of those owed a duty in that year identified as "Gender identity the same as sex registered at birth", with just under half preferring not to answer this question. Under 1% identified as "Gender identity different from sex registered at birth". This appears to indicate that individuals whose gender identity differs from the sex they were registered at birth with are slightly over-represented in the proportion owed a homelessness duty when compared to Census figures for the South East and London.

As Reading-specific data is unavailable, and due to the fact that almost half of individuals owed a duty declined to answer the question, it is difficult to draw even tentative conclusions. Improving data collection locally by understanding why such a high proportion declined to answer the question, and aiming to ultimately reflect Census proportions in terms of response rates, will be important in understanding what this data really tells us about Reading's population and experiences of homelessness among the LGBTQIA+ community. We know from Crisis research that 25% of trans people have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives.

We know that relationship breakdown continues to disproportionately result in single males leaving a family or marital home resulting in precarious housing or homelessness, including rough sleeping and repeat homelessness. We have seen a steady increase in the number of single males owed a prevention duty, from 25% of duties owed in 2020/21 to 41% in 2024/25, while the proportion owed a relief duty has stayed relatively static, ending 2024/25 at 53%. More single males were owed a duty between 2020 and 2025 than single females, with the proportion of single females owed a prevention duty declining slightly from 43% to 33% during the same period, and the proportion owed a relief duty remaining fairly static, ending 2024/25 at 28%. Homelessness prevention work in the past five years with single households has evidently been effective, and while we have seen a greater number of presentations these have largely been resolved via the prevention duty, rather than progressing to, or people presenting at the point at which a relief duty is owed. Consequently, it is important that our new strategy continues to prioritise early intervention and homelessness prevention services for single households, building on success of prevention efforts, commissioned supported accommodation services and continuing to meet increasing demand.

We know that females tend to be the lone parent head of single parent households. The proportion of single parents with dependent children who are owed a prevention duty has dropped slightly between 2020 and 2025 from 20% to 13% of approaches. However, there are still more single parent households than two parent households represented, with duties owed to two parent households remaining fairly static at 9% of the total. It appears that early intervention and homelessness preventions have been effective with single parent households, as the proportion of relief duties accepted has stayed constant over five years, and at a lower proportion than prevention duties, at 11% in 2024/25. This trend follows across to two parent households, with relief duties standing at 5% in 2024/25.

We know that females are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse. The proportion of households owed a prevention duty who were forced to leave their last settled accommodation due to domestic abuse has remained consistent across 5 years at 5%, and the proportion owed a relief duty for the same reason has again stayed fairly consistent at 16%. The higher proportion at relief duty is likely to reflect the fact that households experiencing domestic abuse present due to crisis situations, which are inherently less likely to be resolved or resolvable at prevention

stage. Achieving better early intervention in cases of domestic abuse is complex and our new strategy aims to explore how improved communication and upskilling of partner services and agencies can result in an improved understanding and recognition of homelessness triggers and signs of risk, leading to increased and earlier reporting of domestic abuse and a higher rate of upstream prevention. Domestic abuse is the second highest reason for a household entitled to a relief duty to have lost their last settled accommodation in 2024/25, at 16%, following having been asked to leave by family or friends, which stands at 18%.

Year on year, since 2022, national annual rough sleeping snapshot data shows an increase in single females/females in couples sleeping rough. In Reading, this trend is reversed with numbers captured in the rough sleeping annual snapshot being minimal, and proportionately declining, compared to single males. The Reading trend can be attributed to the commission of female specific and couple's specialist supported accommodation for those with complex and multiple needs and the strategy will seek to ensure that grant funded services to meet this gender-specific need are maintained. Those sleeping rough in Reading are predominantly male - consistently around 85%. No pregnant females, nor families with children are captured in the same rough sleeping data. This demonstrates that outreach support services and homelessness prevention services are significantly responsive to these priority needs.

Consultation with the public and stakeholders outlined concern for 'sofa surfers' and hidden homeless groups, as well as specific experiences of homelessness among women. We know that women are disproportionately affected by hidden homelessness and access services at a later stage, more likely to be in crisis - often this results in women residing in unsafe, and precarious housing situations, with intermittent rough sleeping. We know that single males are disproportionately experiencing rough sleeping. Actions within the strategy's action plan seek to identify and seek insight to provide interventions for these identified groups.

Describe how this proposal could impact on Disability.

Is there a negative impact? No

The proposed homelessness and rough sleeping strategy is expected to have a positive impact on disabled individuals by recognising their disproportionate representation among people experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping.

National evidence shows that people with disabilities are significantly overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping, with 44.1% of homeless individuals identified in Census 2021 reporting a disability - more than double the rate in the general population.

In 2021, 6.2% of Reading residents identified as being disabled and 'limited a lot', down from 7.8% in 2011, while the proportion identifying as 'limited a little'

remained stable at around 9.7%. The percentage of residents identifying as not disabled increased to 84.1%.

While the overall proportion of residents identifying as disabled has declined, there remains a significant need for maintaining and enhancing accessible homelessness and support services. This includes ensuring physical accessibility, targeted support across varying levels of disability and for those with fluctuating or less visible needs and embedding inclusive design and service delivery across all homelessness preventions and interventions.

The percentage of individuals owed a homelessness duty who have “Physical ill health or disability” among their support needs has nearly tripled in the last five years from 5% in 2020/21 to 14% in 2024/25. This category is the second highest among support needs, second only to mental health issues. Fewer than 1% of individuals are recorded as having lost their last settled home because it became unsuitable due to ill health or disability, but this data reflects the primary reason a home was lost and may therefore obscure more complex or multi-faceted reasons for homelessness. It appears, therefore, that individuals who experience disability may be disproportionately and increasingly likely to be owed a homelessness duty. However, we must also note that in April 2024, the local housing authority changed its case management system for all homelessness cases which may have impacted data input, output, and quality.

In April 2023, the Adapted Register for social housing lets was introduced. In August 2025, there were 91 households registered and in 2024/25 19 offers of adapted properties were made. This was a strategic move towards ensuring best use of adapted housing stock and Disabled Facilities Grant funding and towards meeting the current and projected needs of homeless households with disability needs.

We know from prior health needs data collation that people experiencing rough sleeping disproportionately have physical ill-health, especially musculoskeletal and respiratory conditions. Regarding mental ill-health, learning disabilities and neurodivergent conditions, these tend to be suspected by professionals working with people sleeping rough in a supportive capacity, but are often not diagnosed.

Consultation with the public and stakeholders identified a need for non-judgemental and flexible approaches to engaging with individuals whose circumstances and experiences, including disability, might adversely affect their ability to access services. Emphasis was placed on recognising the role of communication in building confidence in services and the addition of tailored services to acknowledge diverse needs and promote equitable access. The Action Plan reflects these concerns and identifies relevant interventions.

Describe how this proposal could impact on Sexual orientation (cover civil partnership)

Is there a negative impact? No

The proposed homelessness and rough sleeping strategy is expected to have a positive impact on individuals of all sexual orientations, with a commitment to inclusive service delivery and improved data capture.

The 2021 Census introduced a voluntary question on sexual orientation for those aged 16 and over. In Reading, 86.83% identified as heterosexual, 1.62% as gay or lesbian, 1.2% as bisexual, and 0.61% as other sexual orientation, broadly in line with regional and national trends.

Local homelessness data from 2020 to 2025 shows that 78% of those owed a duty identified as heterosexual, while 4% identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or other in 2024/25. The proportion of individuals who preferred not to say dropped from 26% to 17%, likely due to improved data collection following a local housing authority case management system change in April 2023. These figures suggest no current disproportionate correlation between LGB identification and homelessness duties in Reading. However, data on sexual orientation among people sleeping rough is not recorded in Reading, limiting insight into potential disparities.

National research, including from Stonewall, Crisis, and the Albert Kennedy Trust (akt), shows that LGB individuals are disproportionately affected by homelessness. Among young people, 77% cite family relationship breakdown, abuse, or being asked to leave home as the primary cause. LGB youth are also twice as likely to experience hidden homelessness, such as sofa surfing or squatting.

Consultation with the public and stakeholders did highlight concern for LGB groups' access to services. In response, the strategy's Action Plan includes measures to improve data capture on sexual orientation across homelessness and rough sleeping services, develop inclusive pathways and ensure staff are trained in LGB cultural competence, collaborate with specialist organisations to ensure LGB individuals are aware of, and can access, appropriate homelessness services - particularly young people at risk of hidden homelessness.

Describe how this proposal could impact on age

Is there a negative impact? No

The proposed homelessness and rough sleeping strategy is expected to have a positive impact across age groups by promoting age-inclusive homelessness and support services. Census 2021 data shows that Reading's median age has increased from 33 to 35, with a 28.7% rise in residents aged 50-64 and a 14.2% decline in children aged 0-4. This demographic shift highlights the need for tailored approaches to both older adults and younger people, including young families and those transitioning to independence.

Analysis of homelessness data from 2020 to 2025 shows that 75% of individuals owed a prevention or relief duty were aged 18-44, with only 3% aged over 64. In 2024/25, just 5% were recorded as having a priority need due to "Old Age" or "Young Applicant". Older people may be underrepresented in homelessness services, likely due to longer tenure in settled accommodation, but also possibly due to barriers in

accessing or engaging with services. Only 1% of those owed a duty were 16/17-year-olds who approached the Service directly, where joint working and placement of this age group is undertaken with BFFC.

Research by Action for Children shows that young people aged 16-24 are disproportionately affected by hidden homelessness in the UK, often living in precarious and informal arrangements such as sofa surfing, sleeping on floors, or staying temporarily with friends or strangers. Research from the youth charity Centre Point states that in 2023/24, approximately 118,000 young people across the UK sought help from local authorities due to homelessness, yet many did not receive formal assessments or support. This gap in recognition and response means a considerable number of young people remain invisible in official statistics, despite facing acute housing insecurity.

Rough sleeping data in Reading between 2020 and 2025 shows that people under 25 rarely sleep rough, and when they do, it is typically for short periods - likely because of access to an immediate off-the-streets offer (crash pad) facility for those aged 18 - 24 and a specialist 40-bed supported housing provision for this group. The majority of people sleeping rough are aged 30-49, consistent with national trends. ONS data shows age-related disparities in mortality, with the average age at death for people sleeping rough being just 45.4 years for men and 43.2 for women - decades below the national life expectancy. This shows the need for targeted interventions for middle-aged individuals, who are disproportionately affected by chronic homelessness and health decline - Reading commissions several supported accommodation bed spaces to meet these specific gender and age needs.

Although public and stakeholder consultation did not highlight strong concerns for specific age groups, professionals working in the young person's sector emphasised the need for cross-sector accountability and improved safeguarding and support pathways for those aged 18 - 24. The strategy's Action Plan includes measures to improve data capture, develop targeted communications for older adults (65+) to promote alternative housing options and prevention services, and enhance early intervention for young people (18 - 24), including those not in care.

Describe how this proposal could impact on Religious belief

Is there a negative impact? No

The proposed homelessness and rough sleeping strategy is expected to have a positive impact on individuals of all religious beliefs and none, by committing to inclusive and culturally responsive service delivery.

According to the 2021 Census, religious affiliation in England and Wales is changing: for the first time, fewer than half of respondents identified as Christian (46.2%), while those reporting no religion rose to 37.2%. In Reading, 36.3% of residents reported no religious affiliation, 39.6% identified as Christian, and 8.9% as Muslim,

with smaller proportions identifying as Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jewish, or other religions.

Currently, religious affiliation is not recorded for individuals rough sleeping or owed a homelessness duty in Reading, making it difficult to assess whether any particular religious group is disproportionately affected. However, given the ethnic diversity of those owed duties, and the likelihood that religion is an integral part of identity for many migrants and asylum seekers, there is a clear need for culturally responsive services that respect and accommodate religious practices.

Although no specific concerns were raised during public and stakeholder consultation regarding religion, the strategy recognises the importance of proactive inclusion. The Action Plan includes measures to improve data capture, train staff in cultural competence, and develop pathways that are sensitive to religious and cultural identity. This will help ensure that individuals of all faiths - or none - can access homelessness services that are respectful, inclusive, and effective.

Describe how this proposal could impact on the Armed Forces community (including reservists and veterans and their families)

Is there a negative impact? No

The proposed homelessness and rough sleeping strategy is expected to have a positive impact on veterans and members of the Armed Forces community, who are recognised in legislation as a group requiring specific consideration.

Under the Housing Act 1996, individuals who are vulnerable as a result of having served in the Armed Forces are considered to have priority need for housing assistance when homeless. Additionally, recent reforms have removed local connection requirements for veterans applying for social housing, ensuring they are not disadvantaged due to the mobility of military service.

Local data in Reading shows little identification of veterans in homelessness services. Between 2020 and 2025, no individuals owed a homelessness duty were recorded as having served in HM Forces. In 2024/25, 0.58% of Housing Register applicants identified as veterans, compared to the national estimate of 3.3% of the population having served. Two applicants who had previously served in the Armed Forces were offered social housing in 2024/25, out of 374 total lets, equating to 0.53%. While offers proportionately equate to applicants, veterans appear to be slightly under-represented in Housing Register applications, if the national figure is applied to Reading's population. This could be considered to be reflected in national rough sleeping data: 60 individuals across England and Wales identified as veterans between May 2023 and June 2024, with none in Reading.

Evidence from Homeless Link and The Big Issue indicates that veterans are overrepresented among people sleeping rough, making up around 6% of the rough sleeping population, despite being a smaller proportion of the general

population - meaning they are twice as likely to sleep rough compared to non-veterans. This disparity is linked to challenges such as PTSD, difficulties adjusting to civilian life, and reluctance to seek help due to a culture of self-reliance. These factors contribute to hidden homelessness and difficulties with data capture. In the absence of being able to assess the numbers of the Armed Forces community experiencing hidden homelessness and sofa surfing, and being able to triangulate this data, this could limit the ability to accurately assess need and demand on resources.

The strategy responds to these concerns by committing to improve data capture, develop veteran-specific support pathways, and ensure that services are inclusive and responsive to the Armed Forces community. Although public and stakeholder consultation did not highlight veterans as a specific concern, the Action Plan includes measures to ensure that veterans are aware of, and can access, appropriate services when needed.

Describe how this proposal could impact on care experienced young people and adults.

Is there a negative impact? No

The proposed homelessness and rough sleeping strategy is expected to have a positive impact on care-experienced young people and adults, who are disproportionately affected by homelessness.

Under the Housing Act 1996, care leavers aged 18 to 20 who were looked after by a local authority at age 16 or 17 are automatically considered to have priority need for housing assistance when homeless. Those aged 21 and over may also qualify if they are deemed vulnerable due to their care experience.

Recent legislation - the Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Victims of Domestic Abuse and Care Leavers) (England) Regulations 2025 - further strengthens protections by removing local connection requirements for care leavers under 25, ensuring they are not unfairly penalised when applying for social housing. This change supports better transitions into independent living and aligns with the government's commitment to reducing homelessness among vulnerable groups.

In Reading, 2% of those owed a prevention or relief duty in 2024/25 were recorded as care leavers aged 18-20. Local rough sleeping data from April 2022 to June 2024 identified six individuals under 25 who had left care, compared to 1,505 nationally. Research from relevant charities suggest that care leavers are significantly more likely to experience homelessness and rough sleeping than their peers. According to the charity Become, care leavers aged 18-25 are nine times more likely to be homeless than non-care-experienced young people. They state that this vulnerability to homelessness stems from systemic issues such as abrupt transitions to

independence, lack of stable relationships, financial insecurity, and mental health challenges. In the absence of being able to assess the numbers of care leavers experiencing hidden homelessness and sofa surfing, and not being able to triangulate this data, this could limit the ability to accurately assess need and demand for services and support.

The strategy addresses these concerns by incorporating feedback from public and stakeholder consultations, which highlighted the need for tailored services and support for care leavers - especially in preventing the cycle of homelessness. The accompanying Action Plan includes specific activities to ensure care-experienced individuals are explicitly considered in service design, delivery, and monitoring. This includes commitments to improve data quality, strengthen joint working protocols, and ensure priority need entitlements are upheld.

Make a Decision

If the impact is negative, then you must consider whether you can legally justify it. If not, you must set out how you will reduce or eliminate the impact. If you are not sure what the impact will be you MUST assume that there could be a negative impact. You may have to do further consultation or test out your proposal and monitor the impact before full implementation.

No negative impact identified - Go to sign off.

How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?

Any future review to Reading's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026 - 31 and/or how its action plan is delivered will include further assessment of the impact on specific groups and how any negative effects will be counteracted.



Recoverable Signature

X



Completing Officer
Signed by: Verena.Hutcheson



Recoverable Signature

X



Lead Officer
Signed by: Verena.Hutcheson

Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

10 March 2026



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	RBC Landlord Services – April to December 2025 Performance Report
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Report author	Natalie Waters - Interim Director for Housing Landlord Services
Lead Councillor	Cllr Matt Yeo, Lead Councillor for Housing
Corporate priority	Thriving Communities
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee note the Housing Landlord Service Performance and key achievements delivered year to date, up to and including December 2025 2. That Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee endorse the themes and programmes of the service improvement plan against the consumer standards.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the performance of Reading Borough Council's Housing Landlord Service delivered year to date, up to and including December 2025 following the inspection by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). The inspection, concluded in April 2025, resulting in a C3 grading for three of the four Consumer Standards. In response, the service has taken decisive action to address the findings and drive service improvement.
- 1.2. At the time of the inspection the service met expectations under the Tenancy Standard, demonstrating strong performance and delivering positive outcomes for tenants. This reflects the Council's ongoing commitment to providing high-quality housing management and tenancy support.
- 1.3. The Housing Landlord service continues to work with the RSH under Provider Improvement, and it is anticipated that regular meetings with the RSH will continue for a minimum of 12 months, after which the Regulator may consider reinspection or regrading. The service needs to demonstrate sustained change that is embedded across the service achieving positive outcomes for tenants.
- 1.4. The Service has received positive feedback via monthly meetings with the RSH regarding the progress made to date on our Service Improvement Plan. The Regulator is confident in the improvements delivered so far and is assured by the actions we have taken to address the root causes of the issues identified. Based on our evidence submissions, the Regulator has confirmed that we are moving closer to

achieving sustainable, long-term change and they are considering reducing the frequency of our meetings.

- 1.5. The Housing Landlord Service remains committed to continuous improvement and regulatory compliance, ensuring that tenants receive safe, secure, and high-quality housing services.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The report is presented to provide assurance to Members that the service is delivering against the strategic objectives of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, with a clear focus on improving outcomes for current and future tenants of social housing.
- 2.2. Landlord performance is monitored against the four Consumer Standards:
 - Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard (including Tenant Satisfaction Measures)
 - Tenancy Standard
 - Safety and Quality Standard
 - Neighbourhood and Community Standard
- 2.3. As part of these standards, housing providers are required to ensure that performance is reported transparently and subject to robust oversight through their established governance structures. Robust governance structures exist within the Directorate which are further complimented by a cross party working group which provides further opportunities to share progress and encourage scrutiny of performance and key issues. This report is also regularly presented to the HNL Committee to provide transparent insight into performance, delivery against the service improvement plan alongside scrutiny and challenge.
- 2.4. A comprehensive Service Improvement Plan has been developed to address the root causes identified during the inspection alongside wider service improvements. The Plan is being actively monitored and delivered through cross-service collaboration, with a focus on ensuring that all actions are delivered, achieve the desired outcomes, embed sustainable change and are aligned to the Consumer Standards.

3. The Proposal

Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard – Tenant Information

- 3.1 The working group established to compile and carry out a tenant census are currently in the final steps of ensuring that NEC can hold all required information from the survey against a tenant's record. This will assist us in better understanding our tenants. Where possible we will direct and support tenants to register for a Housing Online account to respond to the census directly into NEC, for those who are unable to access this online a paper form will be sent.

- 3.2 The aim of the tenant census is to ensure that we have up to date information on our tenants including protected characteristics to ensure that any additional needs or reasonable adjustments are recorded and utilised to inform service delivery and achieve equitable outcomes. An outcome of this would be to conduct a targeted recruitment campaign for engaged tenants from underrepresented groups to ensure fair presentation of our tenant demographic.
- 3.3 Our aim is to launch the tenant census in April 2026. The census will initially be available online through the Housing Online Portal. Currently, only around a third of tenants are registered for this service, so we are also exploring the option of making the census accessible via the corporate Go Vocal platform to increase digital participation.
- 3.4 In addition, officers across the service will support data collection through door-knocking, completing the census digitally with tenants. This approach will allow information to be captured directly into the NEC system, removing the need for separate data entry and improving data quality. As a final alternative, paper forms will be issued where required.
- 3.5 The census is expected to remain open for up to six months to maximise engagement and encourage the widest possible participation. Monthly progress reports will be submitted to LCB and to the next available HNL Committee.
- 3.6 The information we capture will help us to shape the services we deliver to tenants, and especially where tenants have specific needs, we can ensure that our services are still accessible to those tenants. This information will also help us to plan how we improve or change our services to suit emerging needs.

Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard – Tenant Engagement & Scrutiny

- 3.7 The Tenant Engagement Team is currently working with a group of engaged tenants to scrutinise two priority areas of the Housing Service identified by the Tenant Voice Panel, the Repairs Service and the handling of Housing Complaints. Ten tenants are taking part in this scrutiny project with six sessions, running through to April 2026, tenants will review specific aspects of these services and produce written recommendations for service improvement. These findings will be shared with the Regulator of Social Housing and via this Committee.
- 3.8 The tenants will be focusing their scrutiny of the Repairs Service on how we communicate with tenants throughout the repairs process, as well as reviewing the full tenant journey from the point a repair is first reported to the Council. For Housing Complaints, the group is examining whether there are further opportunities to reduce complaint volumes and to strengthen the way we manage and resolve complaints.
- 3.9 Beyond these targeted areas of work planning for our wider Tenant Engagement programme is also underway. The project plan is currently being developed and will be finalised in May 2026 having been agreed by the Tenant Voice Panel, with the intention of launching new engagement activities from that point.

- 3.10 The Tenant Engagement programme will include an action to undertake a benchmarking exercise in the Spring with tenants, using early TSM submission data from Housemark to help build their understanding of what good performance looks like across these measures. Additionally, obtaining the Tenant Quality Mark on all Housing Landlord webpages is also included in the work plan.
- 3.11 Part of our new Tenant Engagement Programme for 2026 to 2027 will also include facilitated focus groups to scrutinise key areas within Tenancy Management and Antisocial Behaviour. These themes have been selected in direct response to feedback from tenants who attended the Housing Information Day and expressed a desire to be more involved in shaping these particular service areas.
- 3.12 Following the success of the Housing information Day the Sounding Board has grown and now consists of approximately 50 registered tenants. Our hope is that as these tenants become more involved, they will be considering joining either the Tenant Voice Panel or the Tenant and Council Together Group (TACT).

Transparency Influence & Accountability – Complaints & Housing Ombudsman

- 3.13 The Housing Ombudsman’s Complaints Handling Code (CHC) for all Social Landlords requires the Landlord to report its performance in relation to complaints to a ‘Governing Body’ on an annual basis. In Reading the Complaints performance is reported to the Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee 3 times per year in order to adhere to this requirement.
- 3.14 There have been 382 complaints received between April 2025 to December 2025, all of which have been responded to.

Table 1. Outcome of complaint in year 2025-26:

Stage 1	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Upheld	35 (68.7%)	32 (69.6%)	25 (50%)	34 (55.74%)	16 (59.3%)	28 (59.6%)	24 (54.5%)	30 (60%)	19 (50%)	243 (63.6%)
Partially Upheld	5 (9.8%)	1 (2.2%)	5 (10%)	7 (11.48%)	4 (14.8%)	9 (19.1%)	6 (13.6%)	5 (10%)	9 (23.6%)	51 (13.3%)
Not upheld	3 (5.9%)	8 (17.4%)	12 (24%)	10 (16.39%)	3 (11.1%)	6 (12.8%)	9 (20.5%)	12 (24%)	5 (13.2%)	68 (9.4%)
No Outcome ¹	1 (2%)	1 (2.2%)	2 (4%)	1 (1.64%)	1 (3.7%)	1 (2.1%)	2 (4.6%)	1 (2%)	0	10 (2.7%)
Multiple Outcomes	7 (13.6%)	4 (8.6%)	6 (12%)	9 (14.75%)	3 (11.1%)	3 (6.4%)	3 (6.8%)	2 (4%)	5 (13.2%)	42 (11%)
Total	51	46	50	61	27	47	44	50	38	382

- 3.15 The number of upheld complaints has decreased from 68.7% in April to 50% in December 2025. A substantial proportion of these upheld complaints relate to the Repairs Service, however historically and commonly with most social housing landlords, repairs complaints received are always at a higher volume compared to our other landlord services.

¹ Not enough evidence to make decision

3.16 The most common themes for the complaints are listed in Table 2 below, in decreasing order of quantities received:

Table 2. April - Dec complaint themes across Housing & Communities.

2025-26	2024-25
Quality of Service Failure to resolve issue Staff training or conduct issue Communication	Quality of service Failure to resolve issue Time taken to resolve issue Communication

3.17 The top themes for complaints mirror those from same period in 2024-25 in the 3 of the 4, the only difference being Staff related issues replacing the Time Taken to Resolve issues from last year’s top themes. When looking at the staff related issues, many of those complaints were in relation to a particular contractor carrying out repairs works on our behalf. This contract has subsequently ended. As part of the Service Improvement Plan, and our focus on learning from complaints, a full review of all upheld / partially upheld complaints is completed quarterly, to identify specific themes where there has been service failures and dissatisfaction. This data is shared with teams to build any required actions into their service plans.

3.18 The timeliness of managing Stage 1 complaints has improved significantly, rising from just 24% completed on time in April 2025 to 89% in December 2025, as shown in Table 3. However, the timeliness of Stage 2 complaint handling still requires improvement, as performance has remained inconsistent throughout the year to date.

Table 3. Complaints responded to on time.

Complaints	Target	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Percentage of Stage One Complaints responded to on time	100%	24%	17.4%	50%	75%	74%	91%	68%	73%	89%
Percentage of Stage Two Complaints responded to on time	100%	33%	0%	100%	86%	0%	0%	50%	25%	31%

3.19 The improvements below have been implemented to ensure we maintain the improvements made in responding to Stage 1 complaints whilst now focussing our attention on improving our handling of Stage 2 complaints:

- The Housing Policy Team continue to support Customer Relations and Housing colleagues in the management of complaint cases, including quality checking responses, plugging gaps, chasing updates and responses from the service to ensure timescales are met.

- Service managers continue to review and sign off all stage 1 responses to ensure their quality and reduce the risk of unnecessary stage 2 escalations.
- We closely monitor our complaints commitment tracker that is reviewed weekly by the Housing and Communities Management Team (HCMT) to ensure visibility and monitor completion of agreed actions arising from complaints.
- Training was delivered through September and December 2025 to officers responsible for investigating and completing stage 2 responses to improve their quality and completeness to encourage a right first-time approach.
- The daily stand ups held across the service together with Customer Relations have been successful in the day-to-day resource management ensuring responses are quality checked and sent out in time.
- Complaints continue to be a standard agenda item on HCMT weekly meetings to guarantee that complaints remain a priority across the service, that deadlines are met and that any issues are flagged at the earliest opportunity.
- A weekly dashboard of all complaints in the service is sent to service managers on a Monday for oversight and action.
- We continue to review quarterly learning from complaints report, which are reviewed by HCMT and recommendations for improvement are discussed and agreed
- We have tightened timescales for officers investigating stage two complaints so that more time is provided to Directors to review the content of investigations, and ensure they are of a high standard.

3.20 In response to the Regulator for Social Housing’s (RSH) recommendations work is progressing with Affinity (Reading) Ltd who manage 1248 units as part of the PFI arrangement to align the services tenants receive specially in relation to complaints.

3.21 This has included Affinity updating the information on their website, and in the information tenants receive regarding their rights to complain. This work also focusses on ensuring the correct time scales are used for formal acknowledgement, and in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaints Handling Code. This is being progressed under the Service Improvement Plan.

3.22 During Quarter 3, Affinity (Reading) reported receiving seven Stage 1 complaints, all of which were responded to within the required timescales, with one case escalated to the Housing Ombudsman. This demonstrates the positive impact of the improvement measures outlined above, particularly as Affinity reported no complaints during the same period last year.

Housing Ombudsman

3.23 The Housing Ombudsmen (HO) makes findings against housing providers following an investigation of a case brought to them by a tenant or following a referral from the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH). Case information is shared retrospectively and there is currently a 6–8 month delay with the HO responding to cases and therefore impacting the production of their end of year report. Once this is received it will be reported at the next available HNL Committee.

3.24 Year to date (April to December), the Housing and Communities service has been notified of 22 cases that have been referred to the Housing Ombudsman, which is broken down as follows:

- 1 case being closed with no further action required
- 13 cases for which we are awaiting further information from the Housing Ombudsman to determine whether they will proceed to formal investigation.
- 4 cases where we are waiting for a final decision (possibly a judgment) from the Housing Ombudsman
- 4 cases where the Housing Ombudsman has asked for information from us, and we are currently in the process of responding to these requests.

Transparency Influence and Accountability - Tenant Satisfaction Survey and Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

- 3.25 Reading Borough Council (RBC) Housing Services has again commissioned NWA Social and Market Research to undertake a satisfaction survey with a random sample of tenants to collect the 12 Tenant Perception Measures (TP01-TP12) as required by the Housing Regulator for the financial year April 2025 – March 2026.
- 3.26 This survey will consist of a random sample of 600 Tenants, including tenants managed under the PFI contract, and will be completed via telephone interviews between October 25 and February 26 to achieve the sample, this follows best practise guidelines for collecting Tenant Satisfaction data from Housemark. Once the survey is completed the report will be sent back to the service in March 2026, and the findings and next steps will be reported at the next available HNL Committee.
- 3.27 Tenant Satisfaction Measures are a mandatory set of performance indicators set by the Regulator for Social Housing. They are made up of two elements, a set of prescribed management information to cover key areas such as decent homes, compliance and complaints, and mandatory satisfaction questions which must be answered by tenants, which is known as the Tenant Satisfaction Survey. This data is used by the Regulator to judge Housing Providers performance and relates specifically to work undertaken by Landlord Services. You will note the statistics for complaints in the table below are different from those specified above, as the complaints that do not relate to Landlord Services have been removed from the TSM.

Table 4. Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Tenant Satisfaction Measures – Performance Information 2025–26 RBCProperties	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
TSM - RP01 - Homes that do not meet Decent Homes Standard (percentage)									
Percentage not meeting decent homes	8.31%	16.73%	16.73%	12.53%	11.10%	10.79%	10.12%	9.20%	9%
No of homes that did not	469	944	944						

meet decent homes in period				707	640	609	571	532	520
TSM - RP02 - Repairs completed within target timescale									
Percentage - Non-Emergency in timescale (40 Days)	69.84%	67.79%	85.81%	82.70%	79.58%	78.9%	77.58%	73.20%	85.29%
Number of Non-Emergency repairs completed in timescale	653	804	1022	894	982	987	1149	683	1096
Number of Non-Emergency repairs completed in period	953	804	1191	1081	1234	1251	1481	933	1285
Percentage - Emergency in timescale (3 Hours)	85.50%	70.35%	87.06%	51.75%	90.45%	89.60%	90.91%	75.22%	86.96%
No of emergency repairs completed in timescale	224	121	175	74	142	155	230	170	180
Number of emergency repairs completed in period	262	172	201	143	157	173	253	226	207
TSM - BS01 - Gas safety checks									
Percentage of gas safety checks completed	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
No of dwellings owned that have received gas safety checks that required them	4629	4629	4629	4629	4629	4629	4629	4629	4629
TSM - BS02 - Fire Safety checks									
Percentage of fire safety checks completed	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
No of dwellings owned that have received fire safety checks that needed them	995	995	995	995	995	995	955	955	955
TSM - BS03 - Asbestos Safety checks									
Percentage of Asbestos	100%	100%	100%		100%			100%	100%

checks completed				100%		100%	100%		
No of dwellings owned that have received an asbestos survey that need one	345	345	345	345	345	345	345	345	345
TSM - BS04 - Water Safety Checks									
Percentage of Legionella Risk Assessments completed	97.21%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
No of dwellings owned that have received a legionella risk assessment that need one	1118	1107	1239	1239	1239	1239	1239	1239	1239
TSM - BS05 - Lift Safety Checks									
Percentage of Communal Passenger Lift Safety checks completed	94.30%	94.30%	94.30%	94.30%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
No of dwellings owned that have received a lift safety check that need one	695 (36/37)	695 (36/37)	695 (32/33)	695 (32/33)	737 (35/35)	737 (35/35)	737 (35/35)	737 (35/35)	737 (35/35)
TSM - NM01 - Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord (per 1000 properties)									
total cases opened per 1000 properties	2.48	2.48	5.31	6.02	2.48	3.72	2.12	2.83	2.12
total number of ASB cases opened	14	14	30	34	14	21	12	12	19
total hate crime cases per 1000 properties	0	0	0	0	0.17	0.35	0.35	0	0.17
* of total ASB opened - how many are hate crimes	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	0	1
TSM - CH01 - Complaints relative to size of landlord (per 1000 properties)									
No of Stage 1 per 1000 properties	7.79	6.90	7.08	4.96	4.78	5.84	8.32	8.50	6.20

No of Stage 1 complaints received	44	39	40	28	27	33	47	48	35
No of stage 2 per 1000 properties	0.35	0.53	1.06	1.24	0.70	0.17	1.06	0.70	1.06
No of Stage 2 complaints received	2	3	6	7	4	1	6	4	6
TSM - CH02 - Complaints responded to within Handling Code guidelines (percentage)									
Stage 1 - percentage responded to on time	11%	8%	50%	75%	74%	91%	68%	73%	89%
No of Stage 1 complaints responded to on time (by complaint start date)	5	3	20	21	20	30	30	35	31
Stage 2 - percentage responded to on time	50%	0%	50%	71%	0%	0%	50%	25%	33%
No of Stage 2 complaints responded to on time (by complaint start date)	1	0	3	5	0	0	3	1	2

3.28 **Transparency, Influence & Accountability, New Standard – Competence and Conduct Standard**

3.29 From October 2026, there will be a new standard introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing, this will require all social housing landlords to ensure that all relevant managers who have direct responsibility for the operational, day to day management of Tenant Services to meet defined qualifications and competence requirements. The standard requires Senior Housing Executives (Directors and Assistant Directors) to hold a fountain degree or Level 5 qualification, and Senior Housing Managers (Head of Service, Service Mangers and Team managers) to hold a level 4 qualification.

3.30 We are currently working towards a plan to ensure that we comply with this new upcoming standard. This affects approximately 50 managers across the service, and the deadlines require for us to be 50% compliant within one year (by October 2027) and 100% compliant by October 2028. This training will be funded utilising the apprenticeship levy.

Quality & Safety Standard - Housing Repairs

3.31 The improvement plan for Repairs and Property services focuses on 10 key workstreams. Four working groups have been established to oversee the

workstreams and weekly operational meetings monitor and track progress against the plan. Quarterly updates are presented to a Cross-Party Working Group alongside updates to this Committee.

3.32 Significant focus has continued on the Works in Progress (WIP) with a noteworthy decrease in the number of open repairs from 4050 in April to 1239 at the end of December. Work continues focussing on how we can continue to improve in line with the target including a deep dive into open jobs, looking at numbers of new jobs raised within a month, and the number completed each month, as well as aged tickets. The service is on track to meet the 1000 target by the end of March 2026 albeit the service will strive for this to continue to improve.

Table 5. Outstanding Works In Progress

Timely & Efficient Repairs Service - Repairs Performance KPIs	Target	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Outstanding Repairs (WIP)	1000	4050	2647	2800	2650	2599	2448	2211	1568	1239
Customer satisfaction (%)	90.00	83.76%	82.81%	87.67%	87.57%	92.55%	85.86%	77.51%	72%	72.31%

Updates for each workstream up to the end of December 2025 are noted below:

Workstream 1 -Transition of service to DCASC – this has been completed.

Workstream 2 – Embedding Culture Change

Culture workshops continue to be delivered to all managers and supervisors, focusing on onboarding, learning and development, performance management and organisational culture. The Executive Director and Assistant Director are holding workshops every 6 weeks, to work through the current themes covering:

- Sickness Absence
- Performance Management
- Bullying & harassment
- Respect
- Office environment
- Shadowing trades/back office to understand roles

Workstream 3 - Review of Roles, Responsibilities and Operating Model

This review has been broken down into manageable groups and initially efforts are concentrated on the back-office structure and roles. Job descriptions for Schedulers, Business Support and Team Manager have been drafted and are

waiting to be evaluated. Alongside this, a business case for the proposed back-office structure has been drafted and passed to the Director for review and sign off.

A wider review of the rest of the service will begin in Q1 of 2026/2027.

Workstream 4 - Recruitment and Retention

There are currently 25 vacancies across Repairs & Property Services from 147 posts, totalling 17.9% which is the lowest it has been since January 2025 when there were 35 vacancies (23%)

Progress continues in the recruitment and retention space. There are now full inductions processes established for each department in the service area, and all the relevant documentation for onboarding is saved to a shared location for all to access, so each new starter follows the induction plans. Managers are asked to audit these records on an ad-hoc basis.

A refer a friend scheme went live on 3rd November 2025.

A campaign has been launched across Reading, to fill vacancies across the service area. Promotional material has now been supplied and shared in various locations (on magnetic signs to apply to fleet vans, in trade counters, community noticeboards).

Recruitment activity to bring additional gas and plumbing resources in-house supporting our transition back to direct delivery is now underway. Adverts were issued at the end of January. Further targeted recruitment is being undertaken using industry-specific platforms and publications to attract qualified surveyors. This has historically been a challenging area to recruit to, so securing the right expertise remains a key priority.

Adverts for a range of professional roles are being placed in RICS and Inside Housing, with several already live.

Workstream 5 - Procurement

Due to the number of contracts required across the service, the procurement of these contracts was initially prioritised based on cost and risk, and a time frame pulled into a procurement program.

There were 16 priority 1 contracts covered by this procurement programme, divided into 12 original contracts assigned as Priority 1 and 4 Priority 1b contracts which were added after the initial programme was agreed.

Eight Priority 1 contracts have been awarded: Lot 1 Reactive Repairs*, Lot 2 Voids and Planned Works*, Interim Gas Waiver, Lift Maintenance, Decent Homes Surveys, Fire Compliance (Lot 3 in standstill), Asbestos and Managed Stores. Two Priority 1b contracts have also been awarded, Windows Replacement & Door Entry Systems, bringing the total to 3 Priority 1b contracts awarded. All awarded contracts have been added to the contracts register.

The procurement programme board meet fortnightly to discuss progress on the remaining priority 1 and 1b contracts. The specifications and strategies for the Scaffolding contract were presented and approved by Procurement Board in

January. Pest Control will be presented at board in February. Final moderation sessions for the Heating and Boiler contract have taken place and award letters are being sent. The final contracts left to complete are Wensley Road, which is expected to be awarded by the end of March, and Air Source Heat Pumps which is aiming for Procurement Board sign off in February.

Workstream 6 - IT System

Consultancy sessions are now complete to configure the system for in-house gas servicing via NEC Mobile. This will result in works orders being raised through the system, and digital LGSRs to be produced. The team have finalised testing and signed off the certificate, so the system is ready ahead of bringing gas servicing back in house.

The implementation sessions for the new Risk Management module in Compliance were completed in December. Following this, sessions are underway and booked through February to implement the accompanying Go Mobile – Risk Management module. This will allow risk assessments and risk inspections to be carried out by RBC officers through a PDA, and this will auto update in the system, as well as keeping track of 3rd party compliance risk assessment dates and remedials.

Configuration work to onboard all contractors into the system is progressing well. The system now enables jobs to be seamlessly transferred from the Council's Repairs Service to subcontractors as required. This ensures full traceability and visibility of all jobs, with actions clearly identifiable within the system and accurately reflected in the Work in Progress (WIP) report.

The trial of the new higher-specification handheld devices for trade operatives has been highly successful, with all operatives reporting significant improvements in performance and usability. As a result, we are now rolling out the upgraded devices across the workforce, with all operatives expected to be equipped with the new technology by March 2026.

Workstream 7 - Closure of Wokingham Borough Council Repairs Service

This workstream is complete.

Workstream 8 - Contract Management

We continue to strengthen contract management across the service, with standardised agendas and minutes now in place for all contract meetings. Routine spot checks of contract monitoring activity have been introduced to provide assurance on the robustness and consistency of our approach.

A comprehensive contracts register has been developed, approved for use, and fully populated with all current contract information. This will be maintained and updated on an ongoing basis to support effective oversight and governance.

Workstream 9 - Policies, Procedures and Processes

Thirteen policies were initially identified as required for the service, and draft versions were produced for review. Following review by the Director and in line with best practice, it was agreed that a revised approach is necessary to ensure the policies are meaningful, accessible, clear, and concise. The service is now

undertaking this work, and a series of follow-up meetings have been held during this period to ensure the revised policies are fit for purpose. These will be submitted for approval at the next HNL Committee.

Work to map processes across Repairs and Property Services continues alongside the policy development programme. A total of 32 processes have been identified across the service, and a central tracker is in place to monitor progress. Each process is being drafted and circulated for review prior to approval and sign-off.

This process-mapping activity forms a key element of the Continuous Improvement Plan, providing a stable foundation for service delivery and producing clear local procedures that all staff will be expected to follow. This will ensure greater consistency and clarity around roles and responsibilities.

Currently, three processes are with the Head of Service for approval. To date, 29 processes have been signed off, and we anticipate all 32 will be fully launched by the end of February. Once approved, all processes will be stored centrally on the Housing & Communities SharePoint site for staff access.

Workstream 10 - Damp and Mould

Following the introduction of Awaab's Law on 27 October 2025, we have implemented a new process map and supporting standard operating procedures to ensure full compliance with the new regulatory requirements. The Tenant Support Module within NEC has now been configured to manage Damp and Mould cases, enabling accurate recording of all activities undertaken by Housing Energy Support Officers. These actions are logged directly against the individual's account in NEC Housing, allowing for improved case management and KPI reporting. A comprehensive 'How To' guide has also been developed to support officers in operating the new process.

All key staff involved in assessing and supporting tenants with damp and mould in their homes have undertaken HHSRS training.

A cross-departmental working group, comprising officers from Housing and Communities, meets weekly to review active cases and identify any operational barriers. A three-month post-implementation review of Awaab's Law will be undertaken in February. This review will assess how effectively the new processes are operating, evaluate outcomes to date, and identify any areas requiring refinement or improvement. The findings and proposed next steps will be presented to the next available HNL Committee.

Quality & Safety Standard - Decent Homes

- 3.33 The percentage of stock failing the standard has continued to reduce month on month and now stands at 9%. This improvement reflects the completion of further detailed inspections of previously failing elements, alongside the delivery of outstanding remedial works. The 2026–27 programme of works report sets out the priority areas the service will focus on over the coming year, supporting progress towards achieving full Decent Homes compliance by March 2028.

Table 6. Decent Homes progress April – July

RBC Only	Target	Apr 25	May 25	Jun 25	Jul 25	Aug 25	Sept 25	Oct 25	Nov 25	Dec 25
Percentage not meeting decent homes	0%	8.1%	16.3%	16.79%	12.53%	11.10%	10.79%	10.12%	9.20%	9%
Number of properties not meeting decent homes	0	469	944	944	707	640	609	571	532	520

3.34 Our programme to get behind every front door continues, with plans underway to appoint a new contractor to complete a further 1,700 Decent Homes surveys during 2026/27. The Asset Manager presented the procurement strategy to the Procurement Board on 16 October 2025, where approval was granted to proceed to market via a framework mini-competition. The opportunity has now been issued to tender and is scheduled to close at the end of February.

3.35 There are no current category 1 or 2 jobs outstanding.

3.36 The 2026/27 programme of works has been developed to deliver the requirements needed to achieve compliance with the Decent Homes Standard. Key themes within the programme include front door replacements, installation of extractor fans, kitchen and bathroom renewals, and heating system upgrades. Options for the most suitable contractor frameworks to deliver these workstreams are currently being assessed. To support effective delivery, fortnightly working groups have been established, and a programme tracker is in place to monitor each project’s progress, milestones, and budget.

Quality & Safety Standard - Update on completion of overdue fire remedial actions

3.37 1At the time of the inspection, the RSH noted that outcomes across health and safety compliance areas were broadly being met. However, they identified some weaknesses with the completion of overdue fire remedial actions. It is important to note that all Fire risk assessment ratings in our buildings are either moderate or tolerable.

3.38 By 19 December 2025 all 571 medium priority and 168 low priority remedial actions were completed.

3.39 Fire Compliance contracts:

Lot 1 covering Fire Risk Assessments, Fire Door surveys, and Building Fabric has been awarded, and contracts have been signed. Mobilisation meetings have taken place and a programme of works agreed with works now commenced.

Lot 2 covering Fire Stopping/Compartmentation remedial works and Fire Doors Replacement has been awarded, and contracts have been signed. Mobilisation meetings have taken place and a programme of works agreed with works now commenced.

Lot 3 covering Emergency Lighting Maintenance, Fire alarm and Refuge systems, Wet and Dry Riser Maintenance, Fire Extinguisher Maintenance, Automatic Opening Smoke Ventilation Maintenance, Sprinkler Servicing & misting systems, Bin Chute Remedial Works and Compliance/Contingency - (Fire alarms, remedial & upgrades) is in stand still due to us receiving a formal legal challenge. This is being managed by the Head of Procurement sighted by the Head of Repairs and Property Services.

- 3.40 We regularly report our performance, including the elements listed above to Councillors, Senior management and Tenant groups.
- 3.41 In addition to the above reporting, there are monthly KPIs that we collate and deliver to the corporate management team to track our progress. We have established monthly meetings to track the progress of performance against our overarching Housing and Committee's improvement plan via the Building Communities, Empowering Lives Working Group which oversees our service improvement plan.

Neighbourhood and Community Standard – Anti Social Behaviour

- 3.42 Improvements have been made on recording and reporting data around Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) and Hate Incidents. We have implemented an updated Policy to include Hate Incidents, the ASB and Hate Policy which was approved at HNL in July 2025.
- 3.43 New Enquiry Referrals into the ASB team have plateaued since August. Case Audit performance remains under 90%, however, clear patterns for improvement have been identified for individual officers and are being managed through performance meetings.
- 3.44 During November and December 4 evictions for ASB took place.

Table 8: Referrals into the Service:

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
No of new Housing ASB Enquiries	11	13	23	26	12	15	10	11
No of Enquiries opened as cases straight away	3	1	7	8	2	6	2	4

- 3.45 The ASB tenant factsheet has been refreshed to include information of the online reporting tool which has approved by the tenant voice panel and has received the tenant quality mark.
- 3.46 The ASB Team Leader and Safer Public Realm Team Leader have implemented a sign off process to ensure that there is management oversight of cases that are being closed. This is to ensure that they are closed in line with the procedure.

Tenancy Standard

- 3.47 The Tenancy Standard is one of the consumer standards set by the Regulator for Social Housing and relates to how registered providers of social housing must allocate their tenancies and dictates the type of tenancies that they can offer. This area during our recent inspection was one that had no failings found, but there have been updates within this area in the work delivered by the service.
- 3.48 During this period, we have delivered positive outcomes for tenants as outlined below:
- Year to date, there has been a 51% reduction on the number of legal notices served on our tenants for rent arrears compared to the same period for 24-25. There have only been 5 evictions carried out year to date for arrears. This is owing to the tenancy sustainment work that is taking place within the recovery teams, maintaining a standard of low number of evictions due to our ongoing preventive work.
 - There has been a reduction in rent arrears of £82,055 since the end of the 2024/25 financial year.
 - A new under occupation scheme was implemented in June 2025 and it is projected that this will help facilitate 21 moves. From June to December 10 moves under this new scheme have been enabled. The new package offers:
 - £1,000 per empty room becoming available
 - Up to £1,000 to assist with removals, reconnection and disconnection of white goods and flooring and a decoration package.
- 3.49 The service is currently managed by referrals from front line officers across Housing and Communities to the Under Occupation Officer with the aim to encourage tenants to move out of their larger properties into alternative suitable accommodation that meets their needs to free up properties to support those in need of larger accommodation. This scheme is now advertised on our website, and a targeted letter with accompanying leaflet is being sent out in phases to those identified as under occupying.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1 The work of the Housing & Communities service contributes to the Council Plan themes around:

- **Promote more equal communities in Reading** - by introducing new meaningful ways for our tenants to engage with and scrutinise the services they receive from Reading the Councils Housing & Communities Service, ensuring their voice is heard and represented
- **Secure Reading's economic and cultural success** - by seeking to let contracts for major projects to contractors who provide a level of social value to the town including opportunities for education, skills and training.
- **Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce Reading's carbon footprint Environment** - by retrofitting existing homes where possible with low carbon initiatives to improve thermal efficiency and ultimately contribute to Reading becoming a carbon neutral town by 2030.

4.2 The programme of works to Council homes makes a difference to our tenants by:

- Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable; and
- Providing homes for those in most need.

4.3 The Housing & Communities service aspires to deliver a common purpose of 'supporting the life that matters to you'. This aims to ensure we tailor our services to meet the individual needs and aspiration of our tenants. Ensuring our Council stock is safe, efficient and well maintained aligns with this ambition.

5 Environmental and Climate Implications

5.1 There are no environmental or climate implications as a result of this information report.

6. Community Engagement

6.1 The Housing Service has an engagement approach that enables consultation with tenants on a range of issues and through different means including, surveys, focus groups, a tenant scrutiny panel and formal consultation, the results of which drive service improvement.

6.2 Details of engagement with tenants via complaints and surveys is included in the body of the report alongside references to the planned improvements around tenant engagement

7. Equality Implications

7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2 There are no proposed changes to services that will negatively impact on the way people access and experience services therefore there is no requirement for an Equality Impact Assessment for the purposes of this report.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

8.1 N/A

9. Legal Implications

9.1 The 2006 Decent Homes Standard is a government-set standard for council housing. The standard describes a Decent Home as one that is fit to live in, in a reasonable state of repair, having reasonably modern facilities and services, and being insulated to a reasonable standard and weatherproof. The standard was updated in 2006 to include the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

9.2 In addition, work outlined in this report is covered by the following legislation, which gives councillors a flavour of the highly regulated nature of the service:

- Landlord & Tenant Act 1985
- Social Housing (Regulations) Act 2023
- Housing Act 2004
- Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994
- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Commonhold & Leasehold Reform Act 2002
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Building Regulations Act 1984
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Sections 2, 3 and 4
- Equality Act 2010
- HCA – The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England from April 2012
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Awaabs Law 2025

10. Financial Implications

10.1 There are no financial implications as a result of the information outlined in this report. The additional post supporting the improvements in the service were previously agreed by Council in February 2025 as part of the Housing Revenue Account budget setting.

10.2 The Programme of works for 2025-26 report is presented to this committee on the 11th of March 2025, which includes budgeted provision of circa £3.7 million to address the remedial works identified through Decent Homes surveys and continued investment in the Council's Housing stock.

11. Timetable for Implementation

11.1 Not applicable.

12. Background Papers

12.1 Not applicable.

Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

10 March 2026



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	PROGRAMME OF WORKS TO COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK 2026/2027
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Melissa Wise – Executive Director Communities and Adult Social Care
Report author	Natalie Waters – Assistant Director Housing Landlord Services
Lead Councillor	Cllr Matt Yeo - Lead Councillor for Housing
Council priority	All
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee note the planned maintenance work programme for Council Homes for 2026/27. 2. That the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee delegate authority to the Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Housing to: (a) tender; and (b) enter into all necessary contracts for individual schemes that begin within the 26/27 work programme as set out in Appendix 1 & 2 of this report subject to sufficient funding being available in the approved Budget (£28.20m across HRA and General Fund) to meet the cost of the schemes.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The report sets out the maintenance work programme for Council Homes for 2026/27. The overall work programme budget for 2026/27 is £27.95m, this maintains an acceptable reserve balance in the HRA Business Plan. In addition, there are £0.255m of General Fund costs relating to Garages and Temporary Accommodation (Appendix 2 provides details of the works to the General Fund Housing Stock 2026/2027) giving a total programme cost of £28.2m.
- 1.2. To accommodate essential Decent Homes Works and Compliance requirements for Council Stock in 2026/27, budget lines have been adjusted to ensure works are prioritised and fall within the available budget.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 There is no single national policy that prescribes specific works to individual properties; instead, national legislation and standards set minimum outcomes and statutory duties, including the Building Regulations, the Housing Act 2004 (Housing Health and Safety Rating System), the Decent Homes Standard, and the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018.

- 2.2 The specific works required are determined locally, informed by stock condition surveys, compliance and risk assessments, and assessed need, including adaptations delivered under the Care Act 2014 and Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) framework, alongside energy efficiency requirements such as Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES).
- 2.3 The planned works programme therefore represents a locally determined, evidence led approach that ensures statutory compliance, protects tenants, supports independence, and aligns with wider strategic objectives, including asset management, prevention, sustainability and value for money

3 The Proposal

Programme Of Works 2026/27

- 3.1 Housing Repairs and Property Services manages the planned maintenance, cyclical repairs, and void works to approximately 5,790 Housing properties including temporary accommodation. There are an additional 1,236 Council Homes managed under contract by Affinity (Reading) Ltd.
- 3.2 The Service has a responsibility to ensure that the housing stock is well maintained in accordance with the Decent Homes Standard and that Council homes are safe and healthy places to live. Beyond bricks and mortar the Service also works to improve the wider environment on housing estates to meet the needs and aspirations of both the Council and our tenants.
- 3.3 The existing housing stock has benefited from past initiatives which have ensured that most properties are above EPC level C. All options for new funding streams for further thermal efficiencies are considered as and when they are launched.
- 3.4 Repairs and maintenance of the stock are delivered by an in-house workforce with support from external sub-contractors, using measured term contracts to allow for fluctuations in volumes and specialist work or where it is more cost effective to do so. In line with a national shortage of skilled trades people, recruitment has continued to be difficult across Repairs and Property Services, however it is noteworthy that our vacancy rate has reduced throughout 25/26 following a continued focus in this area.
- 3.5 To further increase resilience and mitigate any capacity issues, the Service has a procurement programme in place to secure contracts covering 28 different work streams, 12 of which have already been awarded which will further assist in service delivery with planned completion of the remaining 16 contracts by September 2026.
- 3.6 The Appendices to this report provide the detailed programme and expenditure planned for 2026/27. The detail of the works programme is detailed in Appendix 1 which highlights the updated programme and associated budgets for the Council's HRA Housing Stock for 2026/2027. Appendix 2 provides details of the works to the General Fund Housing Stock 2026/2027. Appendix 3 provides a breakdown of the programmes of work by Ward.

4 Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1 The programme of works to Council Homes contributes to the Council's 2025-2028 Council Plan themes around:
- **Secure Readings economic and cultural success** by increasing the number and timeliness of repairs delivered by our Housing Repairs & Property Services teams.
 - **Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce Reading's carbon footprint** by investing in retrofitting renewable energy and carbon neutral assets in existing stock, working towards the Council commitment to being carbon zero in 2030.
 - **Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future** by delivering good quality accessible services and providing self –serve technology to allow tenants to log and monitor repairs.

- 4.2 The programme of works to Council homes makes a difference to our tenants by:
- Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable; and
 - Providing homes for those in most need.
- 4.3 The Housing & Communities Service aspires to deliver a common purpose of ‘supporting the life that matters to you’. This aims to ensure we tailor our services to meet the individual needs and aspiration of our tenants. Ensuring our Council stock is safe, efficient and well maintained aligns with this objective.

5 Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 5.2 The Housing Service looks to improve the energy efficiency and the insulation of Council Homes wherever possible including:
- Investigating and trialling of low carbon and alternative heating systems, the results of which will help to shape the future approach to retrofitting homes to reduce carbon emissions.
 - Replacing external fabric of buildings including external wall insulation.
 - Development of alternative solutions for more difficult to treat properties, such as the Victorian terrace houses.
 - Installing mechanical ventilation with heat recovery systems
- 5.3 The average SAP rating, measure of energy efficiency, of the Council’s housing stock is currently 71.5% EPC band C.
- 5.4 Our local authority new build programmes play a key role in achieving net zero carbon. The development to Passivhaus principals reduces greenhouse gas emissions and will deliver significant long-term energy savings to the tenants. The low running costs and higher quality building mean that costs are significantly reduced over the life of the building for the occupiers.

6 Community Engagement

- 6.1 The Housing Service has an engagement approach that enables consultation with tenants on a range of issues and through different means including, surveys, focus groups, a tenant scrutiny panel and formal consultation, the results of which drive service improvement. With all repairs and maintenance, we look to provide an efficient value for money service and recognise this can only be achieved by engaging with tenants, this is crucial when it comes to getting it right first time. Wherever possible tenants are given choices in the use of materials and colours.
- 6.2 When upgrading kitchens there is a design process, the tenant is involved to ensure the layout and space allows for white goods. Within the range of kitchen units, worktops and tiles the tenant is offered choice of colour.
- 6.3 On our larger refurbishment schemes tenants are invited to evaluate tender submissions.

7 Equality Implications

- 7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2 There are no proposed changes to services that will negatively impact on the way people access and experience services therefore there is no requirement for an Equality Impact Assessment for the purposes of this report.

8 Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1 There are no further relevant considerations that haven't already been factored into the report

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 The 2006 Decent Homes Standard is a government-set standard for council housing. The standard describes a Decent Home as one that is fit to live in, in a reasonable state of repair, having reasonably modern facilities and services, and being insulated to a reasonable standard and weatherproof. The standard was updated in 2006 to include the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The Decent Homes standard is currently under public consultation, with the outcome of the feedback due in the summer of 2026.

- 9.2 In addition, work outlined in this report is covered by the following legislation:

- Landlord & Tenant Act 1985
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- Housing Act 2004
- Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994
- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Commonhold & Leasehold Reform Act 2002
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Building Regulations Act 1984
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Sections 2, 3 and 4
- Equality Act 2010
- HCA – The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England from April 2012
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Awaabs Law Oct 2025

- 9.3 Within this legal framework, work programmes are aimed at ensuring the quality of accommodation, maintaining the 2006 Decent Homes Standard (or standards of design and quality that applied when the home was built if higher than the Decent Homes Standard) and providing a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service that meets applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of the occupants in their homes.

- 9.4 Works and Services will be procured in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. The specified thresholds detail the procurement approaches required. The Repairs and Property Services teams work with colleagues in Legal and Procurement to ensure that compliant contracts are put in place.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1 The majority of the budget, £27.95 million for the works programme 2026-27 is funded through the Housing Revenue Account. In addition, there is £0.255m funding from the General fund for Garages and Temporary Accommodation.
- 10.2 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) receives income through housing rent and service charges, and all expenditure related to council housing is charged to this account. The

Housing Revenue Account is 'ring-fenced' (separate) from other Council activity which is accounted for through the 'General Fund' account.

- 10.3 The Council regularly updates and revises assumptions in a 30-year business plan for the HRA. This includes a comprehensive 30-year programme for replacing major components of homes (roofs, windows/doors, kitchens, bathrooms etc.) and maintaining them to Decent Homes standards.

11 Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1 See specific Appendices.

12 Background Papers

- 12.1 Not applicable.

Appendices

- (1) Appendix 1: Works to Housing Stock 2026-2027 Housing Revenue Account (HRA)
- (2) Appendix 2: Works to Housing Stock 2026-2027 (General Fund)
- (3) Appendix 3: Works to Housing Stock by Ward 2026-2027

Appendix 1 – Planned Works to Housing Stock 26/27 Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

Responsive Repairs		£000's
1	Responsive Repairs	3,954
2	Voids (Minor Works)	1,000
3	Voids (Major Revenue Works)	400
4	Responsive Repairs Contingency	30
Planned Programmes		
5	Estate Maintenance	100
6	Gas Servicing and CO Detectors	460
7	Disrepair Cases	100
8	Non-Gas Heating & MVHR Servicing	165
9	Smoke detector non-gas annual checks	50
10	Essential Cyclical	400
11	Asbestos Surveys	250
12	Periodic Electrical Checks (EICRs)	350
13	Sprinkler System Servicing	175
14	Fire Stopping/Compartmentalisation Works	100
15	Fire Protection (Fire Risk Assessments)	80
16	Legionella Testing	120
17	External Repairs and Decorations	1,000
18	Common Areas	200
19	Pensioner- decs	90
20	Lift Servicing Inc Stairlifts	100
21	Planned Programmes Contingency	250
22	Decent Homes Contingency	687
23	Stock Condition Surveys	100
24	Fire Door Surveys	40
25	Compartmentation Surveys	30
26	Emergency Lighting Maintenance	20
27	Fire Alarm & Refuge System	20
28	Compliance Contingency	100
29	Wet & Dry Riser Maintenance	10
30	Fire Extinguisher Maintenance	10
31	Automatic Opening Smoke Ventilation Maintenance	10
32	Bin Chute Remedial Works	25
Major Capital Works/Decent Homes		
33	Voids (Major Works)	1,000
34	Roofs/Structural works	1,600
35	Rewiring/smoke detectors/upgrades	407
36	Windows	1,900
37	Front Doors	460
38	Doors (Fire)	300
39	Gas Central Heating and Boilers	960
40	Kitchens & Bathrooms	2,730
41	Door Entry Systems	50
42	Asbestos Removals	250
43	Tenant Improvement Fund/Decent Neighbourhoods Works	150
44	Queens Road Improvements (HFR)	702
45	Wensley High Rise, External Fabric and Refurbishment	5,605

46	Major Repairs	160
47	Granville High Rise Cladding & Windows Preparation	100
48	Communal Fire Alarm Upgrades	100
49	Communal Flooring	100
50	Major Capital Works Contingency	39
Special Adaptations		
51	Special Adaptations Major	600
52	Special Adaptations Minor	200
53	Special Adaptations Contingency	111
Total		£27,950m

RESPONSIVE REPAIRS

1. Responsive Repairs

£3,954,000

The Repairs service is a reactive and customer driven. Spend in recent years has been increasing. Factors that influence overall service costs include:

- Standardisation of parts. We benefit from the legacy of earlier generations who standardised components from the 1940's onwards and have continued this process
- A range of competitively priced and recently tendered planned programmes
- Batched gutter cleaning works to reduce use of scaffolding costs
- New types of scaffold and harnessing
- Improved Health and safety provision fuelled by legislation change and by an enhanced risk awareness following Grenfell.
- Repairs and costs analysis broken down by trade job type, material and property type
- Improved specification and increased building items to maintain (such as showers fire alarms and heat recovery ventilation)
- Feedback from surveys driving improvements
- Extended guarantees on boilers.
- Data from Customer Satisfaction surveys

Responsive repairs are undertaken in all Wards across the Borough as required.

2. Voids (Minor Works)

£1,000,000

The cost associated with bringing properties up to approved standards between tenancies, and preparing them for re-letting, is drawn from this budget. We strive to ensure an appropriate balance between cost, re let performance and re-let standards.

Works to Void dwellings are undertaken in all Wards across the Borough as and when they become void.

3. Voids (Major Works)

£400,000

As per item 2.

4. Responsive Repairs Contingency

£30,000

Given the cost of labour and materials has increased as outlined in point 1 a contingency has been assigned for slippage.

5. Estate Maintenance**£100,000**

A housing management-controlled budget to attend to day-to-day estate management issues and repair needs on our estates. This is typically used to improve parking, manage trees, provide dog bins, manage landscaping and paths that do not form part of the Highway.

Estate Management covers all Wards across the Borough as required.

6. Gas servicing and CO Detectors**£460,000**

A landlord is legally required to make every reasonable effort to carry out gas checks every 12 months and at each change of tenancy to all landlord owned gas appliances/ properties with gas meters.

Gas servicing is undertaken in all dwellings that have a gas supply and costs approximately £100/ service. There are 4,592 gas-fed dwellings across the Borough and works will be undertaken in all Wards.

7. Disrepair Cases**£100,000**

This budget has been set aside to meet the costs arising from any claims. Year to date (2025-2026) there have been 87 disrepair cases referred to our legal team, which has doubled from the previous year and this may continue to increase due to reports of cold calling by third party companies, collecting our tenants details and passing these onto no win-no fee solicitors. Letters informing tenants of this issue have been sent along with advice that has been updated on the Council website

8. Non-Gas Heating & MVHR Servicing**£165,000**

We have as part of our carbon reduction works replaced some heating systems with Air Source Heat pumps. New Build Properties are all heated with heat pump technology, which adds to the number for servicing.

With the introduction of Heat pumps, there comes the need to better control the ventilation within dwellings, Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR) ventilates but also recovers heat, this will help to keep tenants fuel bills down. Better ventilation will also reduce levels of condensation and mould growth, however, MVHR is only effective if the units are serviced, and filters cleaned or replaced annually.

Reading Council's current number of these appliances are:

Type	Number Of
Air To Water Heat Pump System	405
MVHR	161
PIV	255
	821

9. Smoke detector non-gas annual checks**£50,000**

Our aim is to check all smoke detectors within our stock on an annual basis, to ensure they are functioning and compliant.

The majority of these checks are undertaken as part of our Gas Servicing; this budget is for those dwellings that have electrically supplied heating and hot water and therefore are not visited as part of the annual gas service programme.

10. Essential Cyclical

£400,000

This budget is in line with previous years and relates to work in the following areas:

- Basic Lift maintenance and safety certification
- Welfare Call system maintenance
- Checks and minor repairs to door entry systems
- Lightening Protection
- Burglar alarms
- Communal lights maintenance
- Communal TV Aerials maintenance
- CCTV

Essential Cyclical Inspections are undertaken in all Wards across the Borough as required.

11. Asbestos Surveys

£250,000

Management of Asbestos in properties is a statutory requirement. With large areas of the Housing Stock built during the 1960s & 70s, asbestos is a common occurrence. This budget allows for the required management surveys to be carried out, along with the more specific and in-depth surveys required to facilitate improvement works.

Elements of the work are on a planned cycle as required for effective management, and other elements are dependent on the improvement/refurbishment programmes of work - it will cover all Wards across the Borough.

12. Periodic Electrical Checks (EICRs)

£350,000

Electric checks are done either as planned checks or when there is a change of tenancy. These checks are carried out every 5 years in line with best practice and cover approximately 1200 properties per annum.

We use the data collected from the electrical checks to determine the rewiring programme and use the data to set programmes to upgrade and renew smoke detectors.

Periodic Electrical Checks are undertaken in all Wards across the Borough as required.

13. Sprinkler System Servicing

£175,000

The design of our new build flats incorporate Sprinkler Systems as part of the fire safety measures. We have also fitted Sprinkler Systems within our Wates Flats and the High-Rise Flats at Wensley Road to improve fire safety. To ensure the systems remain operational these systems require an annual service.

14. Fire Stopping

£100,000

This provision is to address the need of Fire Stopping as identified in the Fire Risk Assessments undertaken.

In the main this work relates to areas where services and cables pass through the compartmentation of buildings, this is to ensure our buildings are fully compliant with current fire safety legislation.

15. Fire Protection (Fire Risk Assessments)

£80,000

Depending on the risk associated with the building type Fire Risk Assessments are required to ensure the buildings meet the current standards. High risk buildings are inspected annually; these are the High-Rise Blocks at Wensley Road and Granville Road. Buildings identified as having a lower risk require an assessment every 3 years.

Work will be undertaken in all Wards across the Borough.

16. Legionella Testing

£120,000

We have a legal responsibility to undertake Legionella testing, this budget is for the testing, inspection and treatment to prevent legionella where required.

17. External Repairs and Decoration

£1,000,000

Typically, this includes a repair package, looking at the outside fabric of the properties and carrying out suitable improvements or repairs to:

- Roofs, Down pipes and gutters and vent pipes
- Brickwork
- Windows and doors
- Porches, Sheds
- Repairs to kitchens

An external painting programme follows the repair works. Painting is subject to weather conditions and stops during the winter period.

Work is carried out on a rolling 8-year cycle.

This year's work will be primarily in Abbey, Church, Coley, Katesgrove, Minster, Park, Redlands, Tilehurst, Woodley Wards.

18. Communal Area Decoration	£200,000
<p>An eight-year cyclical common area programme is set, whilst maintaining additional budget for highly trafficked or vandalised areas in exceptional cases.</p> <p>This year's work is in Church, Coley, Emmer Green, Redlands, Southcote and Tilehurst wards.</p>	
19. Pensioner/Disabled Decoration	£90,000
<p>The Pensioner/Disabled decoration programme is currently carried out on a three-year cyclical programme. The town is divided into three geographic areas.</p> <p>To be eligible, tenants must be of pensionable age or receive a disability benefit and have no resource to an able-bodied person who can do the work for them. The service is provided where the condition of the existing decoration is poor. Tenants receive a pre-work visit to ensure eligibility and discuss choices in colour and finishes.</p> <p>Work will be undertaken in all Wards across the Borough</p>	
20. Lift Servicing Inc Stairlifts	£100,000
<p>Reading has multiple passenger lifts across the housing stock that require servicing. The budget also covers the LOLER testing and servicing of stairlifts.</p> <p>Work will be undertaken in all Wards across the Borough.</p>	
21. Planned Programmes Contingency	£250,000
22. Decent Homes Contingency	£687,000
23. Decent Homes Surveys	£100,000
<p>A contractor will be procured to undertake a programme of 1700 decent home surveys on our properties during this financial year. This will ensure that we adhere to the regulator of social housing requirements to survey every property on a 5-year programme. We anticipate that further works will be identified from these surveys that will be required to fully meet the decent home standard.</p>	
24. Fire Door Surveys	£40,000
<p>There is a legal requirement to survey flat entrance doors and communal doors in properties over 11 metres or 5 storeys. Royal Berkshire Fire Rescue Service have requested all door across our stock are surveyed to ensure due diligence.</p>	
25. Compartmentation Surveys	£30,000
<p>These surveys ensure that fire in domestic flats would not breach into communal areas. These surveys also ensure there is sufficient fire stopping between floors and communal intake cupboards that house electrical cables and tenant's electrical meters.</p>	
26. Emergency Lighting Maintenance	£20,000
<p>This ensures sufficient illumination is present in all communal area of blocks of flats and sheltered housing schemes.</p>	
27. Fire Alarm & Refuge System	£20,000

Communal fire detection systems are to be maintained annually in all buildings where they are installed in communal areas. There are some refuge alarms to allow tenants who cannot self-evacuate to await assistance from the Fire Rescue Service.

28. Compliance Contingency **£100,000**

29. Wet & Dry Riser Maintenance **£10,000**

There is a legal requirement to conduct servicing every 6 months and carryout an annual fully pressurised water test. This is to ensure the dry riser are fit for the Fire Rescue Service to use.

30. Fire Extinguisher Maintenance **£10,000**

Fire extinguishers require mandatory annual servicing and visual monthly inspections to check pressure, damage and accessibility which need to be carried out by a qualified professional.

31. Automatic Opening Smoke Ventilation Maintenance **£10,000**

The electrical windows within staircases need to be maintained to ensure safe egress for tenants and safe access for the Fire Rescue Service. They are inspected every 6 months. The smoke ventilations are linked to the fire alarm system and are activated when the fire smoke detector in the communal areas are triggered.

32. Bin Chute Remedial Works **£25,000**

This ensures that if a fire starts in the bin storeroom of a building, it cannot spread upward through the bin chute. The bin chute is designed to automatically close when it detects heat from an active fire.

MAJOR / CAPITAL REPAIRS

33. Voids (Major Works) **£1,000,000**

See Item 2 above

34. Roofs/Structural works **£1,600,000**

Decent Homes roof failures will be prioritised during this financial year, with programmes of work being developed to determine the most suitable procurement route for a new contract. This contract will cover all roof replacements, repairs and upgrades required for properties that currently do not meet the Decent Homes standard.

35. Rewiring/ smoke detectors/upgrades **£407,000**

Condition rather than age is setting the rewiring budget. The need for full rewires has decreased. The focus has switched to upgrading systems. Rewires tend to be partial, focusing on circuit board replacement and socket upgrades. Selection for these upgrades is on the recommendation of the electric's team (following electrical checks) rather than from general building surveys.

This area of work is very reactive and will therefore be across all Wards within the Borough.

36. Windows **£1,900,000**

Window replaced took place from 1986 onwards, replacing comparatively few before 1991 when the numbers increase. In 1992 the replacement programme focused on houses rather than flats. Windows are a key element in the Decent Homes Standard with a lifecycle of 30 years. Most dwellings have double glazed units.

This year's window renewal will be in Church, Coley, Katesgrove, Norcot, Redlands, Southcote, Tilehurst, Ward and Whitley Wards.

37. Front Doors

£460,000

This budget will be used for the renewal of Front Doors that currently do not meet the Decent Homes standard. Front doors will be replaced across the borough.

38. Doors (Fire)

£300,000

This budget will be used for the renewal of Fire Doors where required. Changes in legislation require the door and frame to be completely renewed where a repair is not achievable.

39. Gas Central Heating and Boilers

£960,000

Boiler replacements are generally scheduled on a 15-year cycle, while full heating system replacements, including radiators and associated components are planned on a 30-40-year cycle.

Although The Council is committed to zero carbon with a target of 2030, in order to achieve this there is a need to look at alternative heating for our dwellings, we need to phase out our gas boilers over time and look to provide alternatives such as air/ground source heating.

Gas boilers will only be installed in properties that already have a gas boiler in place, and no fuel switching from electric to gas will be undertaken. The boilers installed will be high-efficiency, A-rated models with an efficiency of 89%. Although alternative heating options are significantly more expensive, we will continue to progress fuel-switching where practicable and affordable within the available budget.

In some cases, systems will need to be replaced with electric heating. Quantum heaters or similar high-efficiency units will be installed. Although they have a higher initial cost, they do not require annual servicing, which reduces ongoing maintenance expenses.

Gas boilers will be replaced across all wards.

40. Kitchens and Bathrooms

£2,700,000

Kitchens and bathrooms will be replaced across all areas of the borough based strictly on the condition and life cycle of existing facilities.

New kitchens are designed individually, considering the size and type of tenants' existing white goods, with layouts adapted to accommodate these wherever space allows. The kitchen specification includes thicker carcasses, 180-degree door hinges, and metal drawer runners, ensuring durability alongside a modern aesthetic that we anticipate will remain in style while still offering good tenant choice. All kitchen and bathroom taps are lever-operated to support tenants with reduced hand mobility. Our approach aims to balance high-quality modernisation with responsible cost management.

Kitchens and bathrooms will be replaced across all Wards.

41. Door Entry Systems

£50,000

This budget is generally allocated to upgrading or replacing older door entry systems, as well as installing new systems where they would provide clear benefits.

The works programme responds to situations where existing systems become inoperable and cannot be repaired. Installations and upgrades will be carried out across all Wards in the Borough. A review of current door entry systems is underway to support the development of a more structured, planned programme in future.

42. Asbestos Removals

£250,000

Asbestos removal works follow on from the results of the asbestos surveys carried out. Works can either be responsive in nature, to remove asbestos deemed necessary as part of a management survey, or in response to asbestos found ahead of planned improvement works.

43. Tenant Improvement Fund/Decent Neighbourhood Works

£150,000

Tenant Improvement Fund budget is for small scale environmental improvement projects on estates, including improved landscaping, enhanced security and additional parking facilities, with a panel of engaged tenants overseeing all bids submitted.

Decent Neighbourhood Fund is amalgamated with this fund and is overseen by the tenant panel and includes improvements to matt wells, door closers, and refuse disposal. Works will cover all Wards across the Borough.

44. Queens Road Improvements

£702,000

Extensive works are required to the property at the Queens Road to bring the dwellings up to re let standard, this block was previously part of the Homes for Reading portfolio.

45. Wensley Road Estate Flats, External Fabric/Windows and Roofing £5,605,000

The proposals for the three blocks of flats at Wensley Road estate include several measures in line with the Councils Zero Carbon Strategy, the major elements which will significantly improve thermal efficiency of the dwellings includes the replacement of the external wall insulation together with triple glazed windows and a new waste management system. The refurbishment works will also include the replacement of the foul water and drainage system (stack pipes) and the refurbishment of the passenger lifts.

We are currently working with a procurement framework provider to appoint a new Principal Contractor who will carry out the main refurbishment works. This process should take around two months to complete. Once appointed, the contractor will join our design team to help move the project forward

The Coley High Rise blocks are in the Coley Ward of the Borough.

46. Major Repairs

£160,000

Major repairs are batched together for increased efficiencies. Work includes a variety of projects such as replacing fencing, flooring, damp treatments etc.

Works tend to be reactive in nature and will cover all Wards across the Borough.

47. Granville High Rise Cladding & Windows, Preparation **£100,000**

This budget has been set aside for the design, feasibility and preparation of the scheme for the four 8 story Blocks at Granville Road.

The Blocks at Granville Road are in Southcote Ward

48. Communal Fire Alarm Upgrades **£100,000**

A number of communal alarm systems are reaching the end of their operatable life span and therefore will need upgrading/ replacing.

Works will cover all Wards across the Borough.

49. Communal Flooring **£100,000**

A programme to replace the circulation area flooring, stair surfaces and nosing's.

Works will be agreed in priority order with Housing Management.

50. Major Capital Works Contingency **£39,000**

SPECIAL ADAPTATIONS

51. Special Adaptations (Major £600k and Minor £200k) **£800,000**

The purpose of this budget is to provide adaptations to properties to improve living conditions for tenants with a disability or mobility needs. Much of the budget is spent on adapting bathrooms.

Policies and specification changes that we have adopted in relation to general council stock, offering showers above baths and standard showers, meaning standard bathroom costs will increase, but such is demand, special adaptation costs are unlikely to reduce.

This area of work is very reactive and will therefore be across all Wards within the Borough.

52. Special Adaptations Contingency **£111,000**

Appendix 2

£255,000 WORKS TO HOUSING STOCK 2026-2027 (GENERAL FUND)

(Programmes of work funded from the General Fund)

		£'000
1	Garage Repairs	50
2	Garage Planned maintenance	45
3	Temporary Accommodation	160
	Total	255

1. Responsive Garage Repairs £50,000

This budget is for the provision of day-to-day repairs to the 1059 garages.

2. Planned Maintenance to Garages £45,000

Garage maintenance is done on a seven-year cycle of planned maintenance to reasonably maintained sites to ensure garages are kept up to standard

The business case for this budget is to keep garage sites in a lettable condition to maintain the revenue stream whilst maintaining our asset and the appearance of estates. Over the last decade investment in garages has much improved the appearance of estates and removed areas of neglect.

Numbers of garages have fallen in recent years as sites are redeveloped or land included in regeneration projects (such as at Dee Park). Where a site is designated for redevelopment within the next five years, we do not carry out planned maintenance.

3. Temporary Accommodation £160,000

A budget is used for the repair and maintenance of temporary accommodation properties. In recent years we have decreased the budget as repair costs have fallen following the refurbishment of Jimmy Green Court and 2 Wensley Road flats in recent years.

Appendix 3

**WORKS TO HOUSING STOCK BY WARD
2026-2027**

	Work Items	Planned/ Demand led	Ward(s)
Responsive Repairs			
1	Responsive Repairs	Demand led	All Wards
2	Voids (Minor Works)	Demand led	Various
3	Voids (Major Revenue Works)	Demand led	Various
4	Responsive Repairs Contingency	Demand led	All Wards
Planned Programmes			
5	Estate Maintenance	Demand led	Various
6	Gas Servicing and CO Detectors	Planned	All Wards
7	Disrepair Cases	Demand led	Various
8	Non-Gas Heating & MVHR Servicing	Planned	All Wards
9	Smoke detector non-gas annual checks	Planned	Various
10	Essential Cyclical	Planned	Various
11	Asbestos Surveys	Planned	All Wards
12	Periodic Electrical Checks (EICRs)	Planned	All Wards
13	Sprinkler System Servicing	Planned	Coley, Tilehurst, Coley and the Wates Flats in various wards across the Borough
14	Fire Stopping/Compartmentalisation Works	Planned	Various
15	Fire Protection (Fire Risk Assessments)	Planned	All Wards
16	Legionella Testing	Planned	All Wards
17	External Repairs and Decorations	Planned	Abbey, Church, Coley, Katesgrove, Minster, Park, Redlands, Tilehurst, Woodley Wards.
18	Communal Areas- decs	Planned	Church, Coley, Emmer Green, Redlands, Southcote and Tilehurst
19	Pensioner - decs	Planned	All Wards
20	Lift Servicing Inc Stairlifts	Planned	Various
21	Planned Programmes Contingency	Planned	All Wards
22	Decent Homes Contingency	Planned	As required
23	Decent Homes Surveys	Planned	All Wards
24	Fire Door Surveys	Planned	Various
25	Compartmentation Surveys	Planned	Various
26	Emergency Lighting Maintenance	Planned	Various
27	Fire Alarm & Refuge System	Planned	Various
28	Compliance Contingency	Planned	As required
29	Wet & Dry Riser Maintenance	Planned	Various
30	Fire Extinguisher Maintenance	Planned	Various
31	Automatic Opening Smoke Ventilation Maintenance	Planned	Various
32	Bin Chute Remedial Works	Planned	Various
Major Capital Works			
33	Voids (Major Works)	Demand led	Various

34	Roofs/Structural works	Demand led	Various
35	Rewiring/ smoke detectors/upgrades	Demand led	Various
36	Windows	Planned	Church, Coley, Katesgrove, Norcot, Redlands, Southcote, Tilehurst, Ward and Whitley
37	Front Doors		
38	Doors (Fire)	Planned/Demand led	All Wards
39	Central Heating and Boilers	Demand led	All Wards
40	Kitchens & Bathrooms	Planned	All Wards
41	Door Entry Systems	Demand led	Various
42	Asbestos Removals	Demand led	Various
43	Decent Neighbourhoods Works	Planned	All Wards
44	Queens Road Improvements (HFR)	Planned	
45	Wensley High Rise, External Fabric and Refurbishment	Planned	Coley
46	Major Repairs	Planned	Various
47	Granville High Rise Cladding & Windows Preparation	Planned	Southcote
48	Communal Fire Alarm Upgrades	Planned	Various
49	Communal Flooring	Planned	Various
50	Major Capital Works Contingency	Planned	As required
Special Adaptations			
51-53	Special Adaptations	Demand led	Various

Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

10 March 2026



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Allocations Scheme Update
Purpose of the report	To make a key decision
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Melissa Wise – Executive Director Communities and Adult Social Care
Report author	Sarah Hennessy – Interim Housing Needs Manager
Lead Councillor	Cllr Matt Yeo
Council priority	Promote more equal communities in Reading
Recommendations	1. That the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee approve the proposed amendments to the Council’s Housing Allocations Scheme, and that the revised scheme be adopted and implemented in April 2026.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report sets out proposed updates to Reading Borough Council’s Allocations Scheme in response to updated Social Housing Allocations Guidance and Improving Access to Social Housing for Victims of Domestic Abuse Guidance, both published in July 2025 by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MCHLG). The proposed changes address specific requirements relating to Armed Forces personnel, survivors of Domestic Abuse and Care Leavers albeit they do not alter the Council’s overall approach to administering lettings.
- 1.2. Further minor amendments are also proposed to clarify wording in the Scheme ensuring it clearly lays out the Councils’ responsibilities.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. In response to Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996, all local authorities are required to publish an Allocations Scheme setting out how Social Housing is allocated. Reading Borough Council’s most recent Scheme was published in 2024 following consultation and a full review based on the most up to date guidance at the time and included a change in the way in which applications were prioritised.
- 2.2. Periodically, new Social Housing Allocations Guidance is published by Government setting out changes to the way in which local authorities are expected to carry out their functions. While most frequently updates to guidance relate to the eligibility criteria, the guidance issued in July 2025 requested amendments to other areas of the Scheme.
- 2.3. Additionally, improved monitoring of complaints and resident feedback, coupled with a recent legal challenge, has highlighted the need to clarify certain wording in the Scheme which could be open to misinterpretation or challenge.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. This section provides an overview of the recommended amendments in line with the guidance published in July 2025, and amendments to wording that have been identified since the Scheme was published in 2024. Appendix 1 provides the detail of the recommended amendments, with the full Scheme with tracked changes captured in Appendix 2.
- 3.2. Amendments as a result of the July 2025 guidance.
- 3.3. *Armed Forces:*
 - 3.3.1. Local authorities have been asked to expand on their definition for those who are an exception to any residency criteria to include bereaved or civil partners of service personnel, who are required to leave their MOD accommodation following the death of their spouse. For former or existing members of the regular armed forces, it also removes the 5 years from discharge rule and now covers any period of time from discharge.
 - 3.3.2. Priority awarded to armed forces personnel has also been amended with the removal of the 5 years from discharge rule.
- 3.4. *Care Leavers:*
 - 3.4.1. Previously the exception to the residency criteria allowed for young people placed outside of the borough by RBC, and where RBC retained a duty to the young person, they would retain their local connection. Local connection is assessed based on accommodation of choice, and a placement into accommodation by a local authority is not considered accommodation of choice for the applicant. The guidance has asked local authorities to include those care leavers who have been placed in the borough by other local authorities to recognise links to the community, including support, education and employment, that they have built while residing in the borough, and to include the definition of a care leaver.
 - 3.4.2. The impact to the Council is low, with fewer than 5 currently registered in these circumstances.
- 3.5. *Domestic Abuse:*
 - 3.5.1. There are 2 amendments on this matter. Firstly, the current Scheme provides an exception to the residency criteria for those who have fled an abusive relationship and are residing in Safe Accommodation in Reading. The guidance has asked local authorities to expand on these criteria to include any person who has fled an abusive relationship and who needs to move to an area of their choosing for safety reasons, to promote mobility and break down barriers faced by this cohort when trying to relocate and to include the definition of domestic abuse.
 - 3.5.2. Secondly, the new guidance has also set out that, those fleeing an abusive relationship who have a secure tenancy in social housing in a different area, should not be subject to an introductory period in another local authority area, and therefore should retain their security of tenure.
 - 3.5.3. The impact to the Council in relation to these amendments is low. Since 2024, there have been two new applications from out of area to the Housing Register as a result of domestic abuse. Since July 2025, when the guidance was published, we have seen no new applications that would have benefited from either change which, positively, is likely to be due to protections put in place by social housing providers more generally to protect their social housing tenants, with options such as Management Transfers being utilised instead.
- 3.6. Amendments required to clarify the Scheme.
- 3.7. Updating the Scheme in response to the new guidance has also provided opportunity to clarify wording which has been identified through resident feedback as requiring updates.

The way in which the Scheme is interpreted will not change in relation to assessments; however, this is an opportunity to make the Scheme more accessible and transparent.

3.8. *Overcrowding:*

3.8.1. The Allocations Scheme has previously referenced the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) to assess overcrowding, which is incorrect as the HHSRS is primarily an enforcement tool to address poor housing conditions, rather than a measure of suitability of accommodation resulting from overcrowding. The Scheme should instead refer to the Housing Act 1985 assessment for statutory overcrowding which is the assessment used in practice.

3.8.2. This is a minor change and of all the applications currently on the Housing Register only one application has actually been assessed using the HHSRS.

3.9. *Homelessness:*

3.9.1. Prior to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA 2017) the Council's only statutory homeless duty was the main housing duty (the full homeless duty) for which the Allocations Scheme awarded priority. The HRA 2017 introduced two new statutory duties to the homeless legislation, the prevention and relief duties, which were not reflected in the Scheme at the time. Updating the Scheme is necessary to clearly set out how we award priority to those approaching as homeless, and how relevant priority is awarded for each statutory duty. Priority is awarded to those in a prevention or relief duty, with additional priority being awarded where the main housing duty is owed.

3.9.2. This change will not impact any applications as it is clarification of the wording in the scheme.

3.10. *Ineligible Household Members:*

3.10.1. Challenges have been received in relation to when non-eligible members of the household, those household members who do not have recourse to public funds in the UK, are included in assessments for priority and the size of accommodation required. Non-eligible members of the household are legally required to be excluded from the tenancy agreement if housed. Wording has been updated so that the legal position is clearer for applicants.

3.10.2. This is a minor change and of all of the applications currently on the Housing Register only one application is impacted.

4. **Contribution to Strategic Aims**

4.1 The Council Plan has established five priorities for the years 2025/28. The Housing Allocations Scheme supports the following priorities by letting homes in a transparent way:

- Promote more equal communities in Reading
- Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce our carbon footprint
- Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children

4.2 In delivering these priorities, we will be guided by the following set of principles:

- Putting residents first
- Building on strong foundations
- Recognising, respecting, and nurturing all our diverse communities
- Involving, collaborating, and empowering residents
- Being proudly ambitious for Reading

4.3 The amendments to the Allocations Scheme will provide a better response to vulnerable cohorts within, and outside of Reading, and will provide more transparent information for residents, helping to support the Directorate's common purpose of 'Supporting the Life that Matters to You'.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1. In line with the guidance on environmental and climate implications there are no identified implications.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. Consultation is required when major changes are being proposed. However, the amendments set out in this report do not constitute a major change and therefore a full public consultation is not required.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1. There are no proposed changes that alter the Council's overall approach to Letting properties. Therefore, there are no negative equality impacts as a result of the recommended changes in response to the July 2025 guidance. In relation to amendments proposed as a result of feedback, the amendments seek to provide further clarity: no change to how the Scheme is delivered will occur.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1. There are no other relevant considerations.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1.1 Local Authorities must administer the allocation of social housing in line with Part VI of the Housing Act 1996. Local housing authorities are required to have regard to the government guidance entitled 'Statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local housing authorities in England' (which was published in 2012 and most recently updated in July 2025) in exercising their functions under Part VI. Failure to follow statutory provision may lead to legal challenge including a judicial review challenge against the Council or a referral to the Local Government Ombudsman.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1. There are no known financial implications as a result of the recommended amendments.

11. Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1. The timetable for implementation is as follows:

- Approval at HNL Committee 10 March 2026
- Publication of new scheme 1 April 2026

12. Background Papers

- 12.1. There are none.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Housing Allocation Scheme – Proposed Amendments**
- Appendix 2: Full Allocations Scheme with tracked changes**

Appendix 1 – Housing Allocation Scheme – Proposed Amendments

Changes in response to guidance:

Armed Forces

The current scheme sets out:

Applicants who have not been resident in the borough for 3 consecutive years or more may also be considered as Qualifying Persons provided they satisfy one or more of the following criteria: Applicants who have:

- Served in the Armed Forces: and meet one of the following criteria:
 - former members of the Armed Forces within 5 years of discharge.
 - serving members of the Armed Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service.
 - bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner.
 - serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service.

Recommended change:

Applicants who have not been resident in the borough for 3 consecutive years or more may also be considered as Qualifying Persons provided they satisfy one or more of the following criteria: Applicants who have:

- Served in the Armed Forces: and meet one of the following criteria:
 - Existing or former members of the regular armed forces;
 - Bereaved spouses or civil partners of members of the Regular Forces who are no longer entitled to reside in Services Family Accommodation and the death of their Service spouse or civil partner was attributed (wholly or partly) to service.
 - Serving or former members of the Reserve Armed Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service.

The current scheme sets out:

Band 3

- Qualifying forces personnel and bereaved spouses/partners, as defined in section 18.1 (qualification criteria), who also meet one or more of the reasonable preference criteria.

Recommended change:

- Qualifying forces personnel and bereaved spouses/partners, as defined below, and who also meet one or more of the reasonable preference criteria:
 - Former members of the Armed Forces.

- Serving members of the Regular Armed Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service.
- Serving or former members of the Reserve Armed Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service.
- Bereaved spouses or civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Service Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or civil partner.

Domestic Abuse

This is new wording required.

Recommended additions to the Residency Criteria Exceptions:

- A person who is or has been a victim of domestic abuse and who needs to move for reasons connected with that abuse, including from accommodation initially occupied on a temporary basis. Section 1 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines domestic violence and abuse as: any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can include, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse.

For those fleeing domestic abuse a secure tenancy will be offered from the outset where:

- Any existing secure or assured tenant that has to move home due to domestic abuse. This would also apply to a sole tenant that had lost their security of tenure by leaving the home due to domestic abuse, or to a joint tenant, where security of tenure had been lost by the tenancy being terminated. In all circumstances, Reading Borough Council would need to be satisfied that the domestic abuse had taken place.

Care Leavers

This is new wording required.

- A Care Leaver who is:
 - eligible children as set out in paragraph 19B of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989. These are children who are:
 - currently being looked-after;
 - aged 16 or 17; and
 - have been looked after by a local authority in England or Wales for a period of 13 weeks, or periods amounting in total to 13 weeks, since the age of 14, at least one day of which must have been since attaining age 16
 - relevant children as set out by section 23A(2) of the Children Act 1989. These are children who are:
 - no longer a looked-after-child;
 - aged 16 or 17; and
 - a former eligible child
 - former relevant children aged under 25 as set out by section 23C(1) of the Children Act 1989. These are children who are:

- aged 18 to 24; and
 - either a former relevant child or a former eligible child.
- A Care Leaver who is placed in the borough, but another local authority has the responsibility for their support.

Changes in response to feedback:

Overcrowding

The current scheme sets out:

Band 2

- Category 1 Hazard for Space - severe overcrowding in Council stock.

Recommended change:

- Statutory Overcrowding, as defined by Part 10 of the 1985 Housing Act, section 325 and 326, in Council stock.

An overview of the sections is as follows:

Sections 325 and 326 of the [Housing Act 1985](#) define statutory overcrowding in England and Wales. **Section 325 (Room Standard)** deems a home overcrowded if two people of opposite sexes (not cohabiting) must share a room, excluding children under one. **Section 326 (Space Standard)** limits residents based on room count and floor area.

Key Aspects of the Housing Act 1985 (Part 10):

- **Section 325 - The Room Standard:** A dwelling is overcrowded if two people of the same sex (who are not a couple) or two people of opposite sexes (who are not a couple) have to sleep in the same room. Children under one are disregarded, and children aged one to ten are counted as 0.5, and a room includes any space used as a bedroom or living room.
- **Section 326 - The Space Standard:** This sets the maximum number of people allowed to sleep in a dwelling based on the number of rooms and their size.
 - **Room Count Allowed:**
 - 1 room = 2 people;
 - 2 rooms = 3;
 - 3 rooms = 5;
 - 4 rooms = 7.5;
 - 5+ rooms = 2 per room.
 - **Room Size Calculation:**
 - under 50 sq ft are not counted.
 - 50-69 sq ft = 0.5 persons;
 - 70-89 sq ft = 1 person;
 - 90-109 sq ft = 1.5 persons;
 - 110+ sq ft = 2 persons.

The current scheme sets out:

Band 3

- Category 1 Hazard for Space - severe overcrowding in other housing which could be resolved with a move to other private rented/RP accommodation.

Recommended change:

- Statutory Overcrowding, as defined by Part 10 of the 1985 Housing Act, section 325 and 326, in other housing which could be resolved with a move to other private rented/RP accommodation.

Homelessness

The current scheme sets out:

Applicants who have not been resident in the borough for 3 consecutive years or more may also be considered as Qualifying Persons provided they satisfy one or more of the following criteria: Applicants who have:

- Been accepted as Homeless under Part VII of the 1996 Housing Act, as amended, by Reading Borough Council, and the duty still exists. Reading Borough Council will automatically include any person who is owed a duty by the Council under section 193 of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 on the Housing Register.

Recommended change:

Applicants who have not been resident in the borough for 3 consecutive years or more may also be considered as Qualifying Persons provided they satisfy one or more of the following criteria: Applicants who have:

- Been accepted by Reading Borough Council as being owed the Main Housing Duty (full homeless duty) under Part VII of the 1996 Housing Act, as amended, and the duty still exists. Reading Borough Council will automatically include any person who is owed a duty by the Council under section 193 of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 on the Housing Register.

The current scheme sets out:

Band 3

- Statutory homeless households.

Recommended change:

- Homeless households who have been accepted by Reading Borough Council as being owed the Main Housing Duty (Full Homeless Duty) under Part VII of the 1996 Housing Act, as amended.

Non-eligible household members and Restricted People

The first change relates to households generally applying to the Housing Register and the second point relates to how we are specifically required to assess homeless households on the Housing Register.

The current scheme sets out:

- Where an eligible applicant has members of their household who are subject to immigration control or where their terms of entry into the UK prohibit them from a reliance on public funds then they will not be considered to be part of the applicant's household for the purposes of the Allocations Scheme. However, they will be recognised as living with the applicant as part of their household and their needs will be considered.

Recommended change:

- Where an eligible applicant has members of their household who are subject to immigration control or where their terms of entry into the UK prohibit them from a reliance on public funds then they will not be included on any subsequent tenancy agreement, however they will be recognised as living with the applicant as part of their household, factored into the number of bedrooms awarded to the applicant, and will be included in the priority banding assessment.

The current scheme sets out:

17.2. Restricted People and Section 193 Housing Act 1996 (As Amended)

A Restricted Case is a case where the local authority would not be satisfied that the applicant has a priority need for accommodation without having had regard to a Restricted Person.

A Restricted Person means a person who is not eligible for assistance under Part VII Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and is subject to immigration control and either:

- i) does not have Leave to Enter or Remain in the UK or
- ii) does have Leave but is subject to a condition of No Recourse to Public Funds.

In a Restricted Case the local authority should, so far as reasonably practical, bring the Section 193(2) duty owed to an applicant to an end by arranging for an offer of an assured short-hold tenancy to be made to the applicant by a private landlord (a private accommodation offer).

The acceptance of the main Homeless duty will not convey Reasonable Preference for an allocation of social housing in such a case and the restricted person(s) will not form part of the applicant's household for the purpose of an allocation.

Recommended change:

17.2. Restricted People and Section 193 Housing Act 1996 (As Amended)

A Restricted Case is a case where the local authority would not be satisfied that the applicant has a priority need for accommodation without having had regard to a Restricted Person.

A Restricted Person means a person who is not eligible for assistance under Part VII Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and is subject to immigration control and either:

- iii) does not have Leave to Enter or Remain in the UK or
- iv) does have Leave but is subject to a condition of No Recourse to Public Funds.

In a Restricted Case the local authority should, so far as reasonably practical, bring the Section 193(2) duty owed to an applicant to an end by arranging for an offer of an assured short-hold tenancy to be made to the applicant by a private landlord (a private accommodation offer).

The acceptance of the main Homeless duty will not convey Reasonable Preference for an allocation of social housing in such a case and the restricted person(s) will not form part of the applicant's household or assessment for priority for the purpose of an allocation.

Reading Borough Council
Allocations Scheme
2026



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PART 1 – Overview of Reading Borough Councils Allocations Scheme

1. Introduction

The purpose of this scheme is to issue guidance relating to the allocation of social housing within the Borough of Reading. Section 166A of the Housing Act 1996 places a duty on every local housing

authority to prepare and maintain a set of rules which it has adopted, determining the authority's priorities and procedure to be followed in allocating housing accommodation.

Reading Borough Council owns homes across Reading and has nomination rights to Registered Providers' (Housing Association) homes. In acting as a good landlord and as an enabling Local Authority, the Council is committed to managing and letting social housing in a fair and transparent way to assist households with a need for accommodation. Allocations of vacant social housing within Reading are allocated through our Choice Based Lettings process, known as Homechoice at Reading.

This scheme has been developed in partnership with Registered Providers (RPs) and other stakeholders.

The scheme sets out those applicants who Reading Borough Council has decided are a qualifying class of person who can join the Housing Register and those applicants who are considered a non-qualifying class of person who will not be able to access the Housing Register.

The scheme also sets out the criteria against which qualifying applicants are considered in relation to reasonable preference and additional preference categories. It also identifies reasons when individual applicants, who may have a reasonable or additional preference, could be considered to have No Priority for Housing depending on their circumstances.

The full scheme will be made available to inspect at the Civic Offices or on the Council website at

[Social housing - Reading Borough Council](#)

A summary of the scheme can also be provided on request.

Consultation will be carried out when any major changes to the content of the scheme are proposed, to ensure that those affected have input. This will include consultation with Registered Providers.



2. Scheme Aims

The main aims of Reading Borough Council's Allocations Scheme are:

- To let social housing to households with the greatest need for accommodation, while:
 - letting homes in a transparent, applicant-friendly, and fair way, ensuring that existing and new applicants are treated equally
 - ensuring that the housing needs of vulnerable applicants and those in priority need are given reasonable preference

- promoting opportunities for those with a disability to access suitable accommodation
 - promoting mobility for Reading Borough Council tenants
 - attracting key workers and supporting the recruitment of staff to essential services.
- To produce a scheme that:
 - meets the statutory and legal requirements for allocating social housing
 - is easy to understand, applicant focussed and is part of the delivery of an excellent housing service
 - maximises the use of all social housing provided locally ○ minimises the void turnaround time of void properties ○ encourages partnership working with other housing providers
 - To promote, create and establish balanced and sustainable communities, while ○ making sure that the use of Choice Based Lettings (CBL) allows applicants to exercise greater control over their choice of housing, increasing the likelihood that tenancies will be sustained ○ protecting our communities and our property from wilful damage and activity.

In order to help achieve these aims the Council will maintain a Housing Register. This is a list of people registered for housing who are prioritised according to their level of housing need and the local priorities.

3. Management of Information and Decision Making

Information provided by an applicant will be processed in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR) previously known as The Data Protection Act 2018.

The information will be used to assess entitlement in an application for housing, develop our business and provide statistical information.

Information held may also be shared with other housing and/or care providers or agencies to enable the assessment of entitlement to housing.

An applicant can request a copy of personal information held by The Council, by submitting a Subject Access Request (SAR). (See RBC Privacy Notice link below).

The Assistant Director for Strategic Housing, Housing Needs and Communities is the Lead Officer with delegated authority to allocate housing accommodation under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996.

When considering exceptional circumstances, decisions will be made by the Housing Needs Service Manager, following a request from either an applicant or a member of staff. These decisions will be recorded, and reasons provided as to why the decisions have been reached.

4. Statement of Fair Processing

In line with the Data Protection Act 2018, we will process applicants' information for the purpose of assessing housing need, collecting statistical information and to improve our business. We may also use this information to detect and prevent fraud. Personal information will be stored electronically, and this will comply with our Data Protection policies.

Full details of our Fair Processing Notice can be found on the Council website at

[Housing needs: Data Privacy Notice - Reading Borough Council](#)

5. Statement of the Scope of Applicants' Choice

In Reading, the demand for Council and Registered Provider accommodation outstrips the level of supply. This means that the Council is not in a position to offer such accommodation to everyone on the Housing Register who expresses an interest and so, broadly speaking, offers of accommodation will be made to those applicants who have the highest priority for housing under the Allocations Scheme. Whilst one of the primary aims of the Scheme is to house those with the greatest housing need, Reading Borough Council's Allocations Scheme promotes choice by allowing an applicant to express their interest in properties that are advertised.

6. Staff Applying for Social Housing

Reading Borough Council staff applying for housing, particularly those working in the Housing Service, will need to make it known to a senior member of staff that they intend to apply for social housing and must complete the Declaration of Interest part of the form. This will ensure that the application process is transparent and confidential.

7. Elected Members' Involvement

Allocation of Housing (Procedure) Regulations 1997 (SI 1997/483) prevent an elected member from being part of a decision-making body at the time an allocation decision is made, when either:

- The accommodation concerned is situated in their division or electoral ward, or
- The person subject to the decision has their sole or main residence there.

This does not prevent an elected member from representing their constituents in front of the decision-making body or from participating in the decision-making body's deliberations prior to its decision. The regulations also do not prevent elected members' involvement in policy decisions that affect the generality of housing accommodation in their division or electoral ward rather than individual allocations; for example, a decision that certain types of properties should be prioritised for older people.

8. Legislation

Reading Borough Council's Allocations Scheme sets out how social rented housing is allocated to those registered on the Housing Register. Section 159 of the Housing Act 1996 (Part VI) defines an allocation of social housing as:

- Selecting a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of housing accommodation held by this authority;
- Nominating a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of housing accommodation held by another person; or
- Nominating a person to be an assured tenant of housing accommodation held by a Private Registered Provider of social housing or a Registered Social Landlord.

The following are not allocations:

- Transfers of accommodation, unless made at the tenant's own request.
- Family Intervention Tenancies as defined in section 297 of the Housing & Regeneration Act 2008.
- Temporary Accommodation offers.
- Successions.
- Assignments.

- Property Adjustment Orders.
- Allocation to supported accommodation, including extra care housing.

Any request to change an existing tenancy, such as changes to those named on a tenancy agreement, will be considered on a case-by-case basis and it will involve Reading Borough Council offering a new allocation and tenancy agreement. This will be carried out outside of the Choice Based Lettings Scheme however the Qualification Criteria will be applied to any new named tenant. Any changes to a current tenancy agreement must be agreed by Reading Borough Council.

This document makes reference to the legal requirements and policies that must be adhered to. We have had regard to legislation including (but not limited to) the following:

- Housing Act 1996, Part VI and VII as amended.
- Localism Act 2011.
- Homelessness Act 2002.
- Housing Act 1985.
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- Children Act 1989.
- Children Act 2004.
- Equalities Act 2010.
- Data Protection Act 2018.
- Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013.

The scheme has regard to the [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government](#) (MHCLG) guidance and regulations, and other related guidance the most recent and relevant being:

- Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England (June 2012), as amended.
- Providing social housing for local people Code of Guidance (December 2013).
- Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015 (SI2015/967).
- The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/1869).
- The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility)(England) Regulations 2006.
- Homelessness Codes of Guidance for Local Authorities 2018 as amended.
- Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard – March 2015.
- The Allocation of Housing (Qualification of Housing for Victims of Domestic Abuse and Care Leavers)(England) Regulations 2025

The scheme has been developed with regard to Reading Borough Council's own Strategies and Policies, including, but not limited to:

- Reading's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- Tenancy Strategy.
- Tenancy Policy.
- Housing Strategy.
- Housing Adaptations Policy.

The above are subject to periodic reviews.

9. Fraud

S.171 of the Housing Act 1996 makes it an offence for anyone, in connection with the exercise by a housing authority of its functions under Part VI:

- To knowingly or recklessly give false information.
- To knowingly or recklessly withhold relevant information which the housing authority has reasonably required the applicant to give in connection with the exercise of those functions.

The circumstances in which an offence is committed could include providing false information:

- On an application form for social housing.
- In response to a request for further information in support of the application.
- During a review proceeding, see section 34.

This may include any applicant who fails to notify the Council of any relevant change in their circumstances which may affect their application.

Any applicant found guilty of such an offence will be liable to a fine, which could currently be as much as, up to or exceeding, £5000 (level 5 on the standard scale).

Ground 5 in Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by s.146 of the 1996 Act) enables the Council to take possession proceedings against the tenant to recover possession of the property if the local authority were induced to grant the tenancy by a false statement made knowingly or recklessly by the tenant or someone acting on their instigation.

The Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013 identifies tenant fraud as a criminal matter and local authorities have the power to prosecute those who unlawfully sublet their social housing.

All applications received will be assessed by our internal Corporate Investigations Team prior to being added to the Housing Register to determine if there are any fraudulent activity concerns.

10. Equality and Diversity

Reading Borough Council promotes equal opportunities and equality objectives are built into the Council's Corporate Plan. In line with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010, Reading Borough Council will:

- Have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different groups.
- Promote equality between different groups and have due regard to the needs of these groups.

Our aim is to continue to maintain equality and ensure that we let our homes in a non-discriminatory way based on meeting housing need. We also anticipate that the transparency of this scheme will ensure that customers are not treated less favourably on the grounds of any protected characteristics.

11. Property Types

Reading Borough Council has its own stock of accommodation along with nomination rights to accommodation owned and managed in the borough by Registered Providers. Some of Reading Borough Council's properties in the Whitley area are managed by Affinity Housing

through a Private Finance Initiative Agreement. Affinity Housing have the responsibility to carry out the day-to-day management of these properties.

There are a number of different property types that will be allocated to via the scheme. These are:

- General needs accommodation – accommodation let through the main Housing Register for those who can live independently, for either Waiting List Applicants or Transfer Applicants, this includes adapted homes that are let through the Adapted Register.
- Sheltered accommodation – sites predominately consisting of 1-bedroom properties with access to communal facilities. This accommodation has a provision of low-level support and is available to applicants 55 years of age and over. Some sites may be subject to an independent Local Lettings Policy, see section 38. Assessments will be carried out prior to any move into this accommodation to ascertain individual needs and to consider the application against the Local Lettings criteria if applicable.
- Key worker accommodation – Key worker housing is affordable housing; a proportion of this accommodation will be exclusively advertised for Key Workers. This accommodation may be let on a fixed term basis depending on the individual scheme and landlord and may not be subject to an introductory period.

11.1 Tenancy Type

For the purposes of this section a “secure tenant” includes a person with a flexible tenancy granted under s.107A of the Housing Act 1985 (inserted by s.154 of the Localism Act 2011). The term “assured tenant” includes a person with an assured short-hold tenancy, including an Affordable Rent Property (Affordable Rent, which is assessed at no more than 80% of the local market rent, is not subject to the national rent regime but is subject to other rent controls, including service charges).

When allocating general needs accommodation to applicants from the Housing Register, Reading Borough Council will always offer an introductory tenancy (a minimum of 12 months) to those who have not previously been a permanent Reading Borough Council tenant, or a secure tenancy to those who are transferring within our stock.

For those fleeing domestic abuse a secure tenancy will be offered from the outset where:

- *Any existing secure or assured tenant that has to move home due to domestic abuse. This would also apply to a sole tenant that had lost their security of tenure by leaving the home due to domestic abuse, or to a joint tenant, where security of tenure had been lost by the tenancy being terminated. In all these circumstances, the Reading Borough Council would need to be satisfied that the domestic abuse had taken place.*

After the introduction of the Localism Act 2011, fixed term/flexible tenancies were introduced which are for a certain period of time. This could be for a period from 2 years up to 7 years, depending on the criteria. These tenancies are also allocated via the Housing Register and, as above, may be subject to an introductory period.

Social housing providers are able to offer properties at a different rent level, known as Affordable Rent. This will typically be 80% of market rent. Applicants need to consider when they are bidding for accommodation, if this will be affordable for them.

For applicants currently in a secure or assured tenancy who are considering bidding for accommodation with an Affordable Rent or flexible tenancy, it is important to understand the implications on any future tenancy. Please see the following guide:

Current Tenancy Type	The Current Tenancy Start Date	Rent on New Property	Tenancy Entitled to
Secure/Assured	Before 1/4/ 2012	Social Rent	Secure/Assured
Secure/Assured	Before 1/4/2012	Affordable Rent	Assured/Secure or Fixed Term (if this is what is being offered)
Secure/Assured	After 1/4/2012	Social Rent	Assured/Secure or Fixed Term (if this is what is being offered)
Secure/Assured	After 1/4/2012	Affordable Rent	Assured/Secure or Fixed Term (if this is what is being offered)

11.2. Family Intervention Tenancy (FIT)

This is a non-secure tenancy within Reading Borough Council or Registered Provider accommodation which may be offered to those with complex needs. Those families considered for a FIT will be assessed and agreed in partnership with Social Care and other appropriate agencies. The FIT will generally be for a fixed period of time with conditions attached, such as, engagement with relevant agencies and support. They have limited security of tenure, and as such they will be terminable on notice with no need to prove any ground for termination or possession. The aim is to allow households to be supported in order to achieve independence. On the successful completion of a FIT a direct offer may be made to the property being occupied, see section 32.



PART 2 - Allocations Scheme in Detail

Reading Borough Council has 2 registers, the Housing Register and the Adapted Register. This section sets out how to make an application and details the assessments that the application will be subject to, to determine access to the appropriate register and the correct priority.

Any applicant offered accommodation ought to be able to live independently and have the ability to understand and adhere to a tenancy agreement. Consideration will be given to support that can be put in place to help an applicant manage a tenancy agreement, however the principle remains that the applicant themselves ought to be able to understand their obligations under the tenancy agreement.

12. Registers

12.1. Housing Register

There are 2 main groups of applicants on the Housing Register.

Transfer Applicants

Transfer applicants comprise of Reading Borough Council and Registered Provider tenants who register with the Council for alternative social housing.

Waiting List Applicants

Waiting list applicants comprise of first-time applicants, homeless applicants owed duties in accordance with the Housing Act 1996 (Part VII) as amended, or those who are not existing Council or Registered Provider tenants. This group could include people living in the private rented sector or with friends and/or family.

Reading Borough Council may decide to only make properties available for particular groups for the purpose of meeting its statutory obligations, or local priorities.

12.2. Adapted Register

The Adapted Register is for those who require major adaptations in their homes to manage a long-term disability. Properties that are adapted or can be adapted will be available for this group.

13. Adapted Register

Applicants requiring adaptations, outside of, what is considered to be, minor work, will be held on a separate register known as the Adapted Register. Properties that are adapted or lend themselves to adaptations will be available for this group only. This register is required in order to make the process of finding suitable accommodation easier and more transparent for those who require adapted homes. It will assist in ensuring that adapted properties are made available to those who need them. Meeting those needs appropriately can also result in savings on social care and support costs.

Certain Reading Borough Council and Registered Provider properties have been specially designed or adapted for use by applicants with a disability. Likewise, certain properties lend themselves to adaptations whereas others do not.

Reading Borough Council will hold a separate register for those who require an adapted home. The assessment carried out to determine if an applicant should be included on the Adapted Register will include information and advice from our Senior Specialist Housing Occupational Therapist (OT) and OT's employed within Adult Social Care and Brighter Futures for Children.

Any property made available to applicants on the Adapted Register will be suitable for those applicants on a long-term basis. Adaptations that will be considered for the Adapted Register applicants include the following (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Ground floor wet rooms and bedrooms.
- Adapted kitchens.
- Through floor lifts.
- Stair lifts.
- Ceiling track hoisting.
- Widened doors.
- Turning Circles.
- External ramps.
- Any adaptation to the main fabric of the building.

Applicants who have been identified as requiring any major adaptation will be included on the Adapted Register.

Assessments of both property and applicants will fall into one of the following categories:

- Fully wheelchair adapted.
- Partially wheelchair adapted.
- Step free.

The needs of this group will be reviewed on a regular basis by the Senior Specialist Housing OT and other services involved to determine which properties within our existing stock, or any future developments could accommodate their requirements. Assessments of vacant properties will be made to ascertain if they could be adapted to meet the needs of this group, in conjunction with any available Disabled Facilities Grant. If adaptations can be carried out within a reasonable timescale (which will be determined on the need and the length of potential wait for grants to be available), then these properties will also be advertised via the adapted register.

Priority awarded to this group will be in line with the Banding Scheme, see section 21.

Reading Borough Council Housing will remain the decision makers in terms of what is considered suitable on a long-term basis for applicants, and if immediate solutions are required within the current home this will be assessed and arranged by the relevant OT Teams.

14. Application Process

Applications are assessed based on the information provided by applicants about their current housing situation. Therefore, it is important to note that should an applicant move during the process, any priority awarded will need to be reassessed as it will no longer apply. This includes any of the priority set out in section 21, 24 and 25.

An application to join a Housing Register can be made by:

- Submitting a completed and signed Housing Registration Form including an electronic submission, and
- Providing photo identification or a passport photograph for the applicant and their partner, if applicable, and
- Providing an up-to-date copy of the rent account statement if the applicant is a tenant of a Registered Provider and
- Providing equity information for any previously owned home.

- Providing confirmation of residency status if applicant was born outside of the UK.

Once the Homechoice Registration Form has been processed the application is assessed against the qualification and eligibility criteria to ensure that the applicant is eligible and qualifies to register for social housing, see sections 17 and 18.

Once eligibility and qualification criteria are satisfied, Reading Borough Council will assess the application for priority based on housing need, see section 21.

The applicant will receive an acknowledgement letter providing the following information:

- Confirmation of whether qualifying criteria have been satisfied.
- Personal Identification number (PIN) – a unique reference number.
- Details of the initial band in which their registration has been placed.
- Confirmation of the date of application.
- Details of the size of property for which the applicant has been registered.
- Details of how to obtain further information about the Allocations Scheme.
- Information on how to bid for vacant properties.

Assessments of applications to the Housing Register will be subject to a thorough investigation of all the circumstances. As part of the investigation Reading Borough Council may carry out home visits, contact third party agencies (including voluntary sector partners) and will collect evidence where appropriate.

Any decision not to place someone on to the Housing Register (due to ineligibility or non-qualification), to amend an application on the register, or to remove someone from the register, will be notified to the applicant in writing. Reasons for the decision will be provided and the applicant will be informed of their right to request a review of the decision made within 21 days, see section 34.

15. Annual Re-registration

All Housing Register applications will be required to re-register annually, to ensure that the information held is up to date and that the priority awarded to an application remains correct. All applicants will be contacted annually and will be asked to confirm the information held is still relevant. Failure to respond to the request to re-register within 28 days of the request may result in the application being removed from the register. A request for a review of the decision to remove an application can be made, see section 34.

16. Change of Circumstances

All applicants are required to notify the Voids and Lettings Team immediately of any change to their circumstances which may affect their priority for re-housing, for example a change of address, someone joining or leaving their household, the acquisition of property, etc. This may also affect their eligibility or qualification to join the Housing Register.

When an applicant's change of circumstances has been assessed, this may result in a change in the applicant's priority. The applicant will be notified in writing of any change in their priority for re-housing. The applicant's new level of priority will run from the date upon which they informed the Voids and Lettings Team of the change of circumstances, and not from the date of the original application. See Effective Date information in section 22.

A change of circumstance may be considered at any stage of the application process, from initial application to receiving a formal offer and may be identified by an Officer, for example at a home visit or as late as at a viewing.

Where the Council has been made aware of a change of circumstances but has not received updated information regarding the change, such as a completed Homechoice Registration Form, the applicant's band will be reduced until such time as the Homechoice Registration Form has been received and processed, see section 23. This may lead to any successful bid being disregarded, and potentially the removal of any formal offer of accommodation.

17. Eligibility Assessment

Reading Borough Council's Allocation Scheme is framed according to relevant legislation and good practice.

All applicants are eligible to apply for housing, except;

- people from abroad who are subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 unless prescribed as eligible by regulations of the Secretary of State, and
- people from abroad who are not subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 if prescribed as ineligible by regulations of the Secretary of State (Housing Act 1996 as amended).

Further provisions concerning eligibility are set out with regard to allocations in s.160ZA of the Act.

17.1. EEA Nationals

The following EEA Nationals and their families are not considered to be subject to immigration control:

- Those who have acquired leave equivalent to limited leave to enter and remain in the UK (known as pre-settled status) if they are exercising a right to reside that makes them eligible under the EU rules;
- Those that were frontier working in the UK prior to 31 December 2020 and continuously to date; or
- Those and their family members who applied to the EU settlement scheme before 30 June 2021 but have not yet obtained settled or pre-settled status (known as temporary protection) and were exercising an EU right to reside immediately before 31 December 2020 and have a right to reside under retained EU law.

Eligibility can change with a change of immigration status; therefore, eligibility for an allocation of housing will be kept under review. However, the applicant is responsible for informing the Council of any change in immigration status.

Decisions on eligibility based on an applicant's immigration status will be made by a Voids and Lettings Officer, who will take into account information from the Home Office or Border Agency, (or other appropriate government department), and apply relevant Legislation and statutory instruments.

The registration of applicants on the Housing Register is not an acceptance by the Council that they are considered eligible for an allocation of accommodation.

The Homechoice Registration Form includes an eligibility declaration confirming that applicants agree that Reading Borough Council neither agrees nor disagrees that they are eligible for assistance at the point of application. The Council may decide on eligibility at the stage of application or when verifying an application once a successful bid has been made. If the applicant is not accepted on to the Housing Register, they will be advised of this in writing and given information on how to request a review of this decision, see section 34.

Applicants will be asked to provide documentary evidence to prove eligibility for themselves and for all members of their household, at the point that they make a successful bid for accommodation.

If an applicant makes a successful bid for accommodation and is unable to provide documentation to prove eligibility for themselves and their household, s/he will not be allocated the accommodation and will be removed from the Housing Register.

If the proof of eligibility document shows that their eligibility for services was granted after their application date, then their application date will be amended to the date that they became eligible which may result in an allocation not being made on that occasion.

Eligibility for an allocation of accommodation will only be confirmed at the point that Reading Borough Council has checked all relevant documentation, if required, and is satisfied as to the applicant and their household's eligibility.

Each case will be considered individually, taking account of all relevant circumstances. Applicants who successfully bid for accommodation but are deemed ineligible for an allocation of accommodation will be notified in writing of this decision. Applicants will have the right to request a review of this decision within 21 days of the decision date, see section 34.

17.2. Restricted People and Section 193 Housing Act 1996 (As Amended)

A Restricted Case is a case where the local authority would not be satisfied that the applicant has a priority need for accommodation without having had regard to a Restricted Person.

A Restricted Person means a person who is not eligible for assistance under Part VII Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and is subject to immigration control and either:

- (i) does not have Leave to Enter or Remain in the UK or
- (ii) does have Leave but is subject to a condition of No Recourse to Public Funds.

In a Restricted Case the local authority should, so far as reasonably practical, bring the Section 193(2) duty owed to an applicant to an end by arranging for an offer of an assured short-hold tenancy to be made to the applicant by a private landlord (a private accommodation offer).

The acceptance of the main Homeless duty will not convey Reasonable Preference for an allocation of social housing in such a case and the restricted person(s) will not form part of the applicant's household or assessment for priority for the purpose of an allocation.



18. Qualifying and Non-Qualifying Criteria

18.1. *Qualifying*

The Localism Act 2011 introduced powers for Local Authorities to determine who will be allowed to register for accommodation locally. Applicants that satisfy any qualification criteria are known as Qualifying Persons. The following qualifying criteria apply.

- *Those who have been resident in the borough for 3 consecutive years or more at the date of their application and are still resident in the Reading borough area at the point a successful bid is made are considered to be Qualifying Persons on Reading Borough Council's Housing Register.*

Applicants who have not been resident in the borough for 3 consecutive years or more may also be considered as Qualifying Persons provided they satisfy one or more of the following criteria:

Applicants who have:

- Worked in the borough for 3 consecutive years in permanent employment, at the date of their application and are still in permanent employment in the borough at the point a successful bid is made, regardless of number of hours per week. Location of work is determined by an applicant's 'main place of work'. If work placement is split across boroughs, the main place of work must be in the Reading borough area. If an employer's head office is in the Reading borough area, but the location of work is outside the Reading borough area, the actual location where the work is carried out will be considered as the main place of work.
- Immediate family members who have lived in the borough for 3 years continuously at the date of their application and are still residing in the borough - immediate relatives, being mother, father, sister, brother, children over 18. Other special relations, such as relatives who have acted as guardians, may also be considered.
- Carers' responsibilities for a resident in the Reading borough area - when there is an identified need for formal care for a person residing in the borough. The person receiving the care would normally be eligible for a care package from Reading Borough Council and this arrangement must be accepted by the relevant Social Care authority.
- Defined as a key worker and have permanent employment within the borough see Appendix 1.
- Fled an abusive relationship and are in a refuge or other Safe Accommodation in Reading.
A person who is or has been a victim of domestic abuse and who needs to move for reasons connected with that abuse, including from accommodation initially occupied on a temporary basis. Section 1 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines domestic violence and abuse as: any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can include, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse.
- Served in the Armed Forces: and meet one of the following criteria:
 - Existing or former members of the regular armed forces;
 - Bereaved spouses or civil partners of members of the Regular Forces who are no longer entitled to reside in Services Family Accommodation and the death of their Service spouse or civil partner was attributed (wholly or partly) to service.
 - Serving or former members of the Reserve Armed Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service.
- Been accepted by Reading Borough Council as being owed the Main Housing Duty (full homeless duty) under Part VII of the 1996 Housing Act, as amended, and the duty still exists. Reading Borough Council will automatically include any person who is owed a duty by the Council under section 193 of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 on the Housing Register.

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- Been placed outside of the borough by any department of Reading Borough Council in situations such as Child in Need, homelessness or residential care where the statutory duty still applies. Applicants will be considered as resident in the borough during the time of placement.
- A Care Leaver who is:
 - eligible children as set out in paragraph 19B of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989. These are children who are:
 - currently being looked-after;
 - (b) aged 16 or 17; and
 - c) have been looked after by a local authority in England or Wales for a period of 13 weeks, or periods amounting in total to 13 weeks, since the age of 14, at least one day of which must have been since attaining age 16
 - relevant children as set out by section 23A(2) of the Children Act 1989. These are children who are:
 - no longer a looked-after-child;
 - aged 16 or 17; and
 - a former eligible child
 - former relevant children aged under 25 as set out by section 23C(1) of the Children Act 1989. These are children who are:
 - aged 18 to 24; and
 - either a former relevant child or a former eligible child.
- A Care Leaver who is placed in the borough, but another local authority has the responsibility for their support.
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 - Social Housing tenants who have mutually exchanged to a Reading Borough Council or RP home within the borough and who had previously lived outside of the borough.
 - Social Housing tenants seeking to transfer from another local authority district in England in order to be closer to work in the Reading borough area, or to take up the offer of work in the Reading borough area and not doing so would result in hardship. Reading Borough Council must be satisfied that there is a need to move rather than a wish and in making this assessment the Council will consider the personal circumstances of each applicant on their own merit.
 - This work or offer of work must be:
 - Regular work for a minimum of 16 hours per week, this includes apprenticeships but does not include voluntary work; ▪ A minimum of a 12-month contract at the point of application.
 - Where the main place of work is in the Reading borough area.
 - Unreasonable to access by transport taking into account, the nature of the transport, distance, time and affordability.
 - Any other exceptional circumstances, for example (but not limited to), intimidated witnesses including Protected Persons as specified in Section 82 and schedule 5 of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005.

18.2. Non-Qualifying

The following classes of people are considered to be Non-Qualifying Persons and therefore will not be included on the Housing Register:

- Those applicants who are under 16 years of age.
- Those who do not meet the residence criteria as set out in the section above.
- Those who have been evicted from a private rented tenancy, or a private rented tenancy following service of Section 8 notice (Housing Act 1988), for

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rent arrears or other breach of tenancy. Any such applicants cannot reapply for a period of 3 years from the date of their eviction.

- People who have been evicted from a social rented tenancy, or a private rented tenancy following the service of a Section 8 notice, for serious, threatening or violent behaviours which have not been addressed to the Council's satisfaction. Any such applicant cannot reapply for a minimum period of 5 years; however, the Council reserve the right to increase this to up to 10 years from the date of their eviction. Each application will be considered reasonably on consideration of all the relevant facts and if it is decided to extend this period for any length then the Council will notify the applicant explaining the reasons.
- People whose unacceptable behaviour would make them unsuitable to be a tenant, and that a Possession Order for their property would likely be granted by the courts for such behaviour. This will also include the behaviour of other members of the household. Any such applicant will be excluded while their behaviour continues to make them unsuitable to be a tenant. Upon review of information, a decision will be made that a person will be unqualifying and will not be able to submit a new application after 1 year after the decision is made, but the Council reserves the right to continue to treat them as a non-qualifying person.
- Applicants who have refused 3 suitable properties within a 6-month period. Any such applicant cannot apply for a period of 1 year from the date of the last refusal, see section 35.
- Introductory tenants requesting a transfer whilst they have an introductory tenancy. If there is an urgent need to move, then the Council may in some circumstances agree to the transfer. In these circumstances a further introductory tenancy will be offered for the remaining tenancy period.

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Reading Borough Council tenants applying in their own right for a move but still have a joint social housing tenancy.

- Owners of residential property, whether the property that they own is in the UK or abroad, unless one of the following apply:
 - The applicant, or a member of their household, requires major adaptations that are not possible in their owned accommodation; or
 - The applicant and partner are over the age of 55 and there is a need for Sheltered accommodation that they are unable to secure by purchasing a property of this type; or
 - The property owned by the applicant is in negative equity and their property is unaffordable for them.
- Applicants who have received a formal offer of a Part VI Allocation.

Each case will be considered individually. The personal circumstances of each application will be taken into consideration and an assessment will be made regarding their financial ability to secure their own accommodation, including private rented accommodation, and including any equity in the property they own. If accommodation is awarded to the applicant via Homechoice, Reading Borough Council will expect their owned property to be sold within 1 year of the allocation and evidence of this will be required.

In exceptional circumstances, the Council may choose not to apply the above criteria when considering an individual application, for example, if there is an identified need to move as a result of risk to life.

The decision to make an applicant non-qualifying can be made upon review of information and can be made at any point during the lifetime of the application if information is provided to suggest that any of the above would apply.

An applicant will need to re-apply at the end of the period in which they are considered to be a non-qualifying person, or if their situation changes. Once an

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application is received the Council will assess if any non-qualifying period should continue.

An applicant can request a review of any qualification decision, see section 34.

19. Household Members

It is for the Council to decide who can be considered as part of the household, this will be done by considering whether a person is normally resident as a member of the family. When the Council considers requests for housing, it is likely that the following circumstances will be considered:

- Partners who are living in a permanent relationship.
- Dependent children, including children coming out of Social Services care or children who have been adopted/fostered. When an application includes children where there is shared parental responsibility, they will be considered as part of the household if the applicant has the main parental responsibility of the child/children and their address is considered the child's or children's main and principal home. This may be demonstrated and will be assessed on factors such as, receipt of benefit, address used to register for doctors, schools, etc. and frequency of residence.
- Where a person moved in with the applicant at the start of their current tenancy and continues to reside with the applicant, it will be reasonable to expect that they should reside with the applicant.

Anyone who does not meet the above criteria will not normally be taken into account when considering the accommodation to be offered, with the exception of the following:

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Dependent relatives - where a relative of a tenant has had to join the tenant to receive care and there are no other housing options for the family (examples of housing options in these circumstances include where the relative owns their own property or occupies a property large enough to accommodate the family). Here, a relative means partners, parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, siblings, uncles, aunts, nephews and nieces including step relations and half relations. A need for the care that is provided will need to be demonstrated to the Council's satisfaction.

- Carers – in certain circumstances applicants requiring a carer will be registered for an additional bedroom. This could be where the applicant requires personal care both during the day and at night which could only be provided by a live-in carer, which does not include waking night care. It would normally be expected that the person requiring the care be in receipt of Carer's Allowance and Disability Allowance/Personal Independent Payment (PIP) with the highest care component. The carer must be recognised or employed by, or working on behalf of Adult Social Care. It would normally be expected that the carer be a named individual unless care is provided on a rota arrangement made by Adult Social Care or agents on their behalf.
- When a member of an applicant's household is in prison, this person may be included in the household 24 weeks before their confirmed release date from prison if they were resident in the household prior to their imprisonment.
- Children who are living with their parents and are studying at university during term times or serving in the armed forces. In these circumstances their parental home will be considered as their principal home.

Where an eligible applicant has members of their household who are subject to immigration control or where their terms of entry into the UK prohibit them from a reliance on public funds then they will not be included on any subsequent tenancy agreement, , however they will be recognised as living with the applicant as part of their household , factored into the number of bedrooms awarded to the applicant, and will be included in the priority banding assessment.

19.1. Joint Tenancies

Joint tenancies will be created in the following circumstances:

- Where household members have long term commitments to the home, for example, when adults share accommodation as partners, a joint tenancy should be granted. Applicants will be made aware of this option and will also be made aware of the legal and financial implications and obligations of joint tenancies including the implications for succession rights of partners and children. Where a joint tenancy is refused by the Council the applicant/s must be given reasons why.

In the creation of a joint tenancy, both tenants must be present to sign the tenancy agreement. In exceptional circumstances only the absent tenant may be able to sign retrospectively; however, the circumstances surrounding the creation of the joint tenancy will need to be assessed to ensure it was valid. This assessment will take into account historic correspondence from each tenant and the reason why both applicants were not able to attend the sign up.

In accordance with s.160ZA (1) (b) of the Housing Act 1996 as amended, a housing authority shall not grant a joint tenancy to two or more people if one of them is a person from abroad who is ineligible. In these situations, a sole tenancy will be granted to the eligible applicant.

20. Size of property required

The Council's Bedroom Standard is as follows:

- Applicant and partner - 1 bedroom.
- Each child or adult requiring a separate bedroom for medical reasons (medical evidence is required) - 1 bedroom.
- Each adult, or couple, 18 years or over - 1 bedroom.
- Up to 2 children of either sex under 10 years - 1 bedroom.
- Up to 2 children of opposite sex and at least 1 child is over 10 years - 2 bedrooms.
- Up to 2 children of the same sex under 18 years - 1 bedroom.
- A carer (or group of carers) providing overnight care - 1 bedroom.

For applicants who are pregnant, the Council will consider their bedroom need to include the unborn child once they reach 30 weeks gestation. For example, an applicant (and partner) who is pregnant can be considered for a two-bedroom property but only three months before the expected date of delivery. Evidence of the expected due date, such as MATB1 form must be provided for this to apply.

Each person will be allocated 1 bedspace. Single bedrooms are assessed as 1 bedspace and double bedrooms are assessed as 2 bedspaces. The number of bedspaces will determine the size of the bedrooms required in any potential home and to assess if any current home is overcrowded.

For example, a family who require 3 bedrooms, and who have 5 people residing in the household, will require a property with 3 bedrooms which has 2 double bedrooms and 1 single bedroom. If a family of 4 people require a 2 bedroom home, and they reside in a 2 bedroom property which has 1 single bedroom and 1 double bedroom, they would be considered overcrowded as they are 1 bedspace short.

20.1. Smaller Accommodation than needed

Due to the overall demand on larger sized accommodation, in certain circumstances, applicants may be considered for smaller sized accommodation (number of bedrooms) than that specified under the Council's bedroom standard, as long as this does not result in statutory overcrowding, cause children of different sexes to share a room, where the Bedroom Standard would offer separate rooms, or result in more people in the property than the number of bedspaces.

For example, if a household has been awarded a 4 bedroom need due to a child being over 18 and there is another child of the same sex under 18 in the household, on request, Reading Borough Council will consider allowing them to share 1 double room instead of 2 single rooms to reduce the number of bedrooms that is required, unless this it is not reasonable to do so, for example medical advice, etc.

We will only allow a maximum of 2 children per room.

Accommodation smaller than required will not be considered as standard, but it may be considered by the Council where there are particular problems in re-housing a household, or upon request by the applicant.

21. Priority Criteria

Each application on the Housing Register will either be placed in a band or will be considered to have No Priority for Housing. This section will detail how Reading Borough Council determines the priority of applicants on the Housing Register and how the band is awarded as a result. Priority is awarded against 2 criteria, as follows:

- Reasonable Preference

- Additional Preference

The priority bands are for the purposes of assessing and prioritising the housing needs of households. The bands reflect a scale of need, with the highest priority being in Band 1 and the lowest priority cases being awarded No Priority for Housing. All the housing needs of a household within an application will be taken into consideration when determining the priority band, therefore as a household's circumstances change the priority band may be reassessed.

The examples outlined within the housing bands do not represent an exhaustive list. Each case will be assessed on its own merits and placed into the priority band accordingly, in line with the principles of each band.

Priority Band	
Band 1	<p><i>Approved Management Transfers</i></p> <p><i>Circumstances that would result in a threat to life:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A medical condition or welfare concern impacted by the accommodation which would result in risk of life. • An applicant requires adaptations, but the current property is not adaptable, and the lack of adaptations would result in a threat to life of injury. • Witness protection. <p><i>Circumstances that require an urgent move to facilitate other time limited obligations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A moved from a Reading Borough Council property to facilitate renovations and/or demolition. • Successful suitability review/legal challenge – Part VI offer. • Hospital and residential delayed discharges. • Reciprocal arrangements with other Local Authorities resulting in accommodation available out of area for residents of Reading fleeing the area as a result of domestic abuse.
Band 2	<p><i>Circumstances where a home is significantly no longer suitable/accessible and/or there is a recognised need for this accommodation to become available:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Borough Council tenants and internal RP tenants where the resulting vacancy will be allocated via Homechoice at Reading who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ are residing in accommodation larger than they require ○ wish to move from bungalows, regardless of any need or size requirements, who will accept another type of accommodation, not a further bungalow ○ are two existing tenants who wish to become one household and neither property is suitable for the household ○ are tenants residing in adapted homes, and the household no longer require the adaptations, and the home would be advertised via the Adapted Register when vacant • Statutory Overcrowding, as defined by Part 10 of the 1985 Housing Act, sections 325 and 326, in Council Stock. To facilitate a move from support accommodation within Reading Borough Council where the resulting vacancy will be made available to meet demand within the borough, in line with quota queue criteria.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A medical condition or welfare concern impacted by the accommodation which poses a significant risk. • Those who meet the Right to Move criteria.
Band 3	<p><i>Legislative direction to provide a higher priority than reasonable preference</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • – Statutory Overcrowding, as defined by Part 10 of the 1985 Housing Act, section 325 and 326 in other housing which could be resolved with a move to other private rented/RP accommodation. • Homeless households who have been accepted by Reading Borough Council as being owed the Main Housing Duty (Full Homeless Duty) under Part VI of the 1996 Housing Act, as amended. • A medical condition or welfare concern impacted by the accommodation which poses an identified risk. • Qualifying forces personnel and bereaved spouses/partners, as defined below, and who also meet one or more of the reasonable preference criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Former members of the Armed Forces. o Serving members of the Regular Armed Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service. o Serving or former members of the Reserve Armed Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service. o Bereaved spouses or civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Service Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or civil partner. <p><i>To facilitate a move to any sheltered accommodation within Reading Borough Council</i></p> <p><i>To facilitate a move for RBC tenants within sheltered accommodation</i></p>
Band 4	<p><i>Circumstances that meet the definition of reasonable preference – see section 21.1 unless different priority applies, as specified above</i></p> <p><i>To facilitate a move for Council tenants (including Affinity tenants) who do not meet any reasonable preference categories</i></p>

No Priority For Housing (NPFH)	<p><i>None of the reasonable preference categories apply or any other listed above</i></p> <p><i>Applicants assessed as No Priority for Rehousing for the period as set out in section 23</i></p>
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The Band awarded will be based on the situation that attracts the highest priority.



Reasonable Preference Categories

21.1.

Section 166A (3) of The Housing Act 1996 (as inserted by the Localism Act 2011) states that a Local Authority's Allocations Scheme shall be framed so as to ensure reasonable preference is given to:

- Applicants who are homeless within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (including those who are Intentionally Homeless and those not in a priority need).
- Applicants who are owed a duty by any Local Authority under section 190(2)¹, 193(2)² or 195(2) of the 1996 Housing Act (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under section 192(3).
- Applicants occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions. Housing conditions will be considered unsatisfactory where a household lacks kitchen, bathroom, toilet facilities or heating.
- Applicants who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds related to disability).
- Applicants who need to move to a particular locality in the district of an authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others). This includes applicants who need to move under the Right to Move Guidance, and those who need to move to give/receive essential support.

¹ Applicants who are threatened with homelessness and in priority need as defined by the Housing Act 1996 Part VII as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002

² Applicants who are intentionally homeless and are either occupying temporary accommodation for a short period or entitled to advice and assistance as defined by the Housing Act 1996 (Part VII). Applicants who are in priority need and are unintentionally homeless as defined by the Housing Act 1996 (Part VII) as amended.

Priority will be awarded for medical and welfare issues depending on the nature of the concern and the impact the accommodation is having on a medical condition or the applicant's welfare. This will be awarded in line with the principles of the bands.

21.2. Additional Preference

In addition, section 166A (3) of the 1996 Housing Act (as inserted by the Localism Act 2011) gives housing authorities power to frame their Allocations Scheme to give additional preference to particular descriptions of people who fall within the statutory reasonable preference categories. Assessing the need for additional preference will require evidence from relevant professionals involved, such as Police, Social Care, medical professionals, etc. Applicants who may be given additional priority will include but are not limited to:

- People at risk of serious violence or threats of serious violence that is likely to be carried out, this includes domestic abuse, racial harassment and hate crimes including agreed Management Transfers, see section 23.
- Witnesses of crime, or victims of crime who would be at risk of intimidation amounting to violence or threats of violence if they remain in their current homes.
- Those who need to move due to an urgent medical reason.
- Prescribed members of the armed forces as set out in section 21
- Those who need to move due to an urgent welfare issue.
- Those who satisfy the Exceptional Strategic Lettings criteria as set out in section 21.2.1, in order to make best use of housing stock.

Additional Preference categories will be assessed, and a band will be awarded in line with the principles of the bands.

21.2.1 Exceptional Strategic Lettings

Additional Preference categories include circumstances where Reading Borough Council needs to best manage the housing stock, known as Exceptional Strategic Lettings. There are some circumstances where Reading Borough Council needs to take steps to manage the stock in the best interests of current tenants and of those waiting for accommodation. In such circumstances, in order to make best use of the housing stock, the Council will award overriding priority.

The following situations will attract an increased level of priority:

- Succession to a property larger than the Council considers is reasonably required for the applicant and legal action, be that the service of a possession notice and/or the issue of possession proceedings, has commenced, or can be commenced, to recover the property.
- Tenants of Reading Borough Council whose homes are being demolished.
- Tenants of Reading Borough Council whose properties require major renovation, where a decant to a temporary home while the works are carried out is not a reasonable option.
- Tenants of a social housing property living in accommodation larger than they need within Reading Borough Council's area – in some situations the Tenant Incentive Scheme will apply, please request further information.
- Tenants occupying accommodation with major adaptations that they no longer require or occupying accommodation that is in high demand as assessed by Reading Borough Council.
- Any other exceptional circumstances.

Under occupiers in social housing will not be awarded priority where there are other people living in the property, who are not included on the application, and there is a likelihood that they would be made homeless as a result of an offer of smaller accommodation.

22. Effective Date

Reading Borough Council will apply an effective date to all applications. This will generally be the date that the application is received or the date where it has been assessed there is a significant change in the applicant's circumstances. This date will be used to help prioritise bids when the properties are being shortlisted and bids are received from multiple applicants who are in the same band. If an applicant's priority changes, and is increased, the effective date will change to the date that the decision was made for the increase in priority. If an applicant's priority changes, and is decreased, the effective date will revert back to the date that the application was received.

23. No Priority for Housing

Applicants who do not meet the criteria set out in section 21 regarding reasonable or additional preference will be considered to have No Priority for Housing.

There will be situations where an applicant will have No Priority for Housing even though their application might otherwise attract reasonable and/or additional preference. The following is a list of such applicants:

- Applicants who have financial resources available to meet their housing costs (section 166A (5) of the 1996 Housing Act) for example: assets, savings or a level of disposable income that could be reasonably applied to securing alternative accommodation in either the owner-occupied, low cost home ownership or private rented sector. Each case will be considered individually, taking into account all relevant financial and personal circumstances of both the applicant and of the housing market.
- Applicants who have deliberately worsened their living conditions in an attempt to increase their opportunities for re-housing. For example, where an applicant occupies a property, which is suitable for their needs, and relinquishes it for less suitable housing. Such applicants will be placed in the No Priority for Housing band and this could be for a period of up to 1 year.
- Applicants who have had a change of circumstance and have not informed the Council. Such applicants will be placed in the No Priority for Housing band until a new Homechoice Registration Form has been received, at which point, following the assessment, priority will be awarded to reflect the new situation. It is the applicant's responsibility to notify the Voids and Lettings Team of any change in circumstances as soon as possible.
- Applicants who are subject to possession proceedings by either the Council or a Registered Provider, due to breach of tenancy or licence which includes rent arrears and anti-social behaviour (section 166A (5) of the 1996 Housing Act).
- Applicants who are applying to buy their Council property or being considered for other housing options such as Shared Ownership/Homebuy. Such applicants may not be considered for an allocation of accommodation. However, each case will be considered individually, taking account of all relevant circumstances
- Council or Registered Provider tenants where the property and/or garden of their existing home is not in a lettable condition. Such applicants will be placed in the No Priority for Housing band until the condition of either the property or the garden has improved (depending on the circumstances of each case).
- Council tenants who have made unauthorised alterations to their property and have either not carried out remedial works or have not paid necessary recharge amounts.

- Applicants who have a current or a proven history of rents arrears and/or anti-social behaviour. In such cases the Council may stipulate certain conditions, which must be met. This could be making and adhering to an agreement to clear rent arrears or adhering to a Behaviour Agreement. Any debt must be legally recoverable for this to apply.
- Applicants who are found to be intentionally homeless within the homelessness legislation. Such applicants will be placed in the No Priority for Housing band for a period of 1 year.
- Applicants who have refused a direct offer of accommodation will be placed in the No Priority for Housing band for a period of 1 year, see section 32.
- Homeless households who have refused a final offer of accommodation will be placed in the No Priority for Housing band for a period of 1 year.
- Applicants who have received major adaptations to their home via the Disabled Facilities Grant will be placed in the No Priority for Housing band for a period of 5 years. If during this time the property becomes unsuitable for the applicant due to medical need this will be assessed on a case by case basis.

Any successful bid(s) made by an applicant in one of the above groups may be disregarded.

The above groups may however be given priority for re-housing in exceptional circumstances such as serious medical or welfare needs. Each case will be decided on its facts and merits.



24. Management Transfers

The Council's Management Transfer Panel will consider the following situations:

Secure, Assured and/or Introductory tenant moves:

The Council will utilise Management Transfers to support moves for tenants who are considered to be at serious risk, to address community cohesion and to make best use of the housing stock.

1. The Council will decide if a tenant of Reading Borough Council or a Registered Provider (where the resulting vacancy will be made available to Reading Borough Council) should be awarded overriding priority for a move on a permanent basis. This would normally be as a result of an emergency, for example, where violence or domestic abuse occurs which poses a serious threat to their life or the life of their family, and the tenant is considered to be high risk, or where the risk or likelihood of violence is ongoing, and the normal actions of an injunction or other legal action cannot be taken or would be unlikely to afford sufficient protection. In these situations, a Band 1 will be awarded.
2. In exceptional circumstances, the Council may decide that a tenant of Reading Borough Council (including Affinity Housing tenants) only, should be awarded overriding priority for a move on a permanent basis in circumstances where his/her behavioural problems, or those of someone within the household, are unavoidably causing severe disruption to neighbours or to the household itself. In such cases the Council will make a direct offer of accommodation, see section 32. This situation could occur where a member of the household has anti-social behaviour issues and, whilst engaging with appropriate services, it is considered that a move would reduce the disruption to neighbours and the household concerned. The Council will make decisions on a case-by-case basis. In these situations, a Band 1 will be awarded.

Thorough investigations will be undertaken in respect of all the above situations, including liaison with the Police, Social Services, and other agencies to establish the degree and severity of the problem(s) being suffered.

There may be situations where it is deemed that an applicant is not safe in any part of the Reading borough, and a move within the borough may have already been facilitated previously under the same circumstances, and/or there are no interventions that can support them to remain safe in the borough. In full consultation with the applicant, a Management Transfer may not be agreed. In these situations, the applicant will be referred to the Homelessness Prevention Team to provide alternative options and support to move out of the borough.

In circumstances where a tenant has no option but to move to an alternative temporary solution, such as a refuge, emergency accommodation or with family or friends, as a result of the risk, their Management Transfer allows them to retain rights to their property and rights as a tenant.

Once a Management Transfer has been approved:

Approved Management Transfers will be reviewed every 3 months.

The council will remove Management Transfer status if the applicant's circumstances change, and an urgent move is no longer required.

Advice on areas considered safe for the applicant will be given at the time the Management Transfer is accepted. The Voids and Lettings Officers will monitor bidding activity and will ensure that bids are made in areas that are safe for the applicant. Bids made by applicants to areas where there is deemed to be an on-going risk to the applicant, or a household member will not be considered and will be overlooked. This will be confirmed to the applicant.

Larger sized family units can be difficult to secure. This is because of limited social housing resources. It may be necessary to consider a range of options when considering these needs and this may include allowing the applicant to place bids on properties of the same size as their current accommodation via Homechoice at Reading or private rented accommodation under the Rent Guarantee Scheme (see section 42).

Individuals who are not tenants:

Overriding priority (Band 1) may be given to individuals residing in Reading Borough Council or Affinity homes, who are not named on the tenancy, the named tenant is no longer living in the accommodation and where there is a clear need for that individual or a member of their household to remain in the property that they are in or in an alternative social rented property.

This situation may arise in the following circumstances:

- Where the sole tenant has left the property, leaving his or her partner and children in occupation, but the remaining occupier is not a named tenant.
- The remaining partner/close family member following the death of a secure tenant when there is no statutory right to succeed, but the Council are satisfied that there would be a duty through homeless legislation to provide accommodation to the individual.
- Spouses, civil partners or cohabiting couples who would be able to apply to the courts for an order under Schedule 7 of the Family Law Act 1996.

To determine if overriding priority should be awarded for an allocation, the following issues will be considered on a case-by-case basis:

- Whether the individual has been using the property as their main and principal home for a period of 1 year or more; and
- Whether there is an identified need or vulnerability as determined by a priority need assessment under Part VII of the 1996 Housing Act, as amended; and
- If any other suitable housing is available to meet the needs of the individual and/or their household; and
- Whether the individual is a close family member of the current named tenant or late tenant, which is parent, grandparent, child, spouse (including civil partner, common law partner), sibling, uncle, aunt, nephew or niece. In exceptional circumstances the Council may consider those who are not a relation or in a relationship but have been providing care and support to the tenant which can be clearly evidenced to the satisfaction of the Council. This will be assessed on a case by case basis; and
- The suitability of the parties as tenants, where there is or has been identified anti-social behaviour or unpaid housing charges which are the applicant's responsibility or where, alternatively, they have taken no reasonable steps to rectify; and
- Whether the property is adapted and whether the adaptations are required.

If it is agreed at panel, following consideration of the above issues, that the individual living in the property should be awarded overriding priority, the following will apply:

- Where the Council determines the current property is of a suitable size or smaller than required.
 - The property currently occupied will be offered as a direct offer to the individual, see section 33, once the original tenancy has been brought to an end. There is no option for the household to move to alternative accommodation and a new introductory tenancy will be provided for the current property only.
- Where the Council determines the current property is too large.
 - The applicant must bid for alternative suitable accommodation via Homechoice at Reading, or sanctions set out in section 35 will apply. There is no option for the household to remain in the current property and a new introductory tenancy will be provided for the new property.

All approved Management Transfer applicants must participate in Homechoice at Reading.

If it is decided by the Management Transfer Panel that an applicant be awarded overriding priority, as per section 33 and 35, those accepted for a Management Transfer will be able to refuse only 1 offer of suitable accommodation via Homechoice at Reading. If this offer is refused, or the applicant is not bidding for accommodation, a direct offer of suitable accommodation will be made. If a direct offer is refused sanctions may apply.

If the tenant does not apply to join Homechoice at Reading within 3 months of the case being approved, support of a level that the Council considers appropriate, will be provided to ensure that an application is received, and the risk will be regularly reviewed. An offer of alternative accommodation cannot be made without an application being received.

If an applicant's request for a Management Transfer is refused, or their status removed, they will be advised of this decision in writing. The applicant can request a review of this decision within 21 days of the date that they were notified. A senior Officer who was not involved in the original decision making will consider the review and respond within 21 days of receipt of the request. The decision may result in the case being referred back to the Management Transfer Panel for a further discussion if new information is provided as part of the request for a review. See section 34 for more information on how to make the request to review.

Remit of the review

The remit of the review is to consider whether the process of decision making in considering the application of priority was followed correctly, specifically:

- Whether the correct procedures were followed in the making of the original decision,
- whether the relevant sections of the Allocations Scheme have been applied to the case and the panel has correctly taken into account any relevant information submitted, and
- to consider any additional information submitted that may be relevant to the application of the Allocations Scheme for the case which may change the outcome of the decision.

25. Medical and Welfare Assessments

Applicants who have a medical condition or welfare concern that is being impacted by their current housing may complete a medical assessment form, which is also included in the Homechoice Registration Form, or provide further information in writing regarding their situation. Reading Borough Council will consider the information provided to determine if any further priority should be given to their application for housing. Information submitted for all members of the applicant's household will be considered.

In order to make assessments, information will be requested from the applicant, which may include letters from medical specialists, GP notes, prescription details and this may include a home visit to clarify the link between an applicant's health or welfare and their housing situation. Assessments will be carried out by Voids and Lettings Officers in line with the principles of the banding structure and will take into account the composite need of the household. In complex situations, that require more technical expertise, deemed appropriate by the Voids and Lettings Team, an assessment will be carried out by the Independent Medical Advisor (IMA), who is a qualified GP. In situations where there is a physical disability advice may also be sought from the Senior Specialised Housing Occupational Therapist.

To be allocated a medical or welfare priority there must be evidence that the applicant's illness, disability, and/or welfare must be negatively impacted directly by their housing circumstances, for

example, difficulty accessing parts of their accommodation because it has not been adapted.

Within the assessment a recommendation will be made on the type of properties that would be considered suitable, generally based on the level of mobility. If an applicant bids for unsuitable accommodation based on these recommendations, the Voids and Lettings Team may disregard the bid. If the applicant wishes to be considered for accommodation that has not been recommended, the application and priority awarded will need to be reassessed.

The Voids and Lettings Team may recommend that an application is reassessed. This may be because improvements have been carried out to the current accommodation e.g. adaptations that should alleviate the medical need, or if an applicant's medical condition deteriorates and they provide further medical evidence. Applicants can request their medical assessment to be reassessed and this may be completed by another medical partner or by the Voids and Lettings Team. There must be a clear change in the circumstances for reassessment to be carried out.



26. Vulnerable Customers and Specifically Identified Groups

It is important to Reading Borough Council that everyone has the same opportunities to access our service and as such we will support vulnerable customers, where necessary, so that they are able to access the Housing Register and to understand what this means. If an applicant requires additional support this should be made clear to the Voids and Lettings Team so referrals to appropriate support agencies can be made, information can be translated into different languages, additional time can be allowed for those who require it and practical support can be provided if this is required.

Reading Borough Council has implemented a Quota Queue process to further support vulnerable applicants to ensure that there is equal access to the service. Some groups have been detailed below, however this is not an exhaustive list and any situation or need will be assessed. In addition, Reading Borough Council considers its responsibilities as a corporate parent to be a priority.

26.1. Quota Queues

Each year Reading Borough Council will review the needs of those housed. This will inform quotas for different social care groups, meaning that individuals within these groups may be given additional priority or properties restricted to the groups. For the properties advertised via the Quota Queue and as part of the allocations plan, an annual assessment will be carried out regarding the property requirements of these groups. The awarding of additional priority to specific groups will be considered in consultation with social care groups or agencies. From time to time, it may also be necessary to restrict adverts to specific groups or to provide a direct offer of accommodation. This could be in circumstances where a specific group of applicants are experiencing acute housing difficulties or where there is a need to intervene to enable community cohesion in neighbourhoods.

26.1.1. Social Care Group Quota Queues

The different social care Quota Queue groups are:

- Young people leaving care.
- Homeless people, this may include:
 - ○ rough sleepers where there are no specific support needs
 - ○ people moving on from the Homeless Pathway. The Move On Options Panel determines which individuals are included in the quota.
- People with Adult Social Care needs who need to leave supported accommodation to live more independently. This will include those accessing Mental Health Services, Learning and Physical Disabilities Services. The Housing Teams determine which individuals are included in the quota.

To access the Quota Queues, the Voids and Lettings Team will engage with the relevant professionals, such as the Leaving Care Team and Adult Social Care to ensure that the applicant being referred is able to understand a tenancy agreement and manage a home. Without this assurance it is likely that any tenancy created may fail, and while Reading Borough Council will work to prevent this from occurring, applicants will only be placed on the relevant Quota Queues once the Voids and Lettings Team are satisfied that any tenancy that may be created is sustainable and there is still availability on the Quota Queue. If more than the agreed number of applicants are referred to the Quota Queue any further applicants will be considered the following financial year.

Applicants who are moving from supported accommodation, where the move will produce a vacancy for another person who requires that support, will be awarded additional priority, Band 2. This will enable a flow of accommodation for those who require it and will ensure that applicants do not spend more time than necessary in inappropriate accommodation.

26.1.2. Right to Move Quota Queue

Each year Reading Borough Council will review the needs of those social housing tenants who live outside of the borough and need to move to Reading to be nearer to work or to take up an offer of work. 1% of lettings will be offered to this group per year and the Council will manage this quota by increasing the priority, see section 21.

26.1.3. Key Worker Quota Queue

The Key Worker definition will vary depending on the grant allocated to Registered Providers for developing the scheme. The Council also has its local definition of a Key Worker, defined in Appendix 1.

Reading Borough Council will review the number of applications it receives from Key Workers and then award a percentage of vacant properties to this group each year. This will be in addition to opportunities that may become available specifically for this group in new developments within the borough. The Council will manage this quota by restricting adverts to this group.

26.1.4. Refugee Resettlement Quota Queue

Local Authorities will be periodically asked to respond to humanitarian crises to support the safeguarding of foreign nationals. Reading Borough Council will commit to support a proportionate number of applicants seeking refuge and utilising any government resettlement scheme. The number of properties required will be reviewed on an annual basis or as and when requests are made by the Home Office. If further resources are required this will be identified through other resources such as the Rent Guarantee Scheme, see section 42.

26.1.5. Housing First Quota Queue

Housing First is a model of accommodation provision for entrenched rough sleepers and former rough sleepers, which provides support to ensure that the tenancy succeeds. Once individuals are identified as appropriate for Housing First a property will be identified and offered as a direct let.

Further Quota Queue groups may be identified based on housing need.

Even though Quota Queues are in place, larger sized family units can be difficult to secure. This is because of limited social housing resources. It may be necessary to consider a range of options when considering these needs and this may include private rented accommodation under the Rent Guarantee Scheme, see section 42.

26.2. Vulnerable Groups

26.2.1. Travelling Families

There is a duty for local authorities to complete regular assessments of the accommodation needs of Travelling Families living in their area as they do for the rest of the community. Travelling Families will be assessed within the parameters of the housing scheme and a strategic assessment is carried out within Reading Borough Council's Housing Strategy.

26.2.2. Fostering, Adoption and Special Guardianship Orders

Children's Social Care have a duty under section 22 of the Children Act 1989 to ensure sufficient accommodation is available to meet the needs of Looked After Children, as defined in that Act, in their area. Housing Needs will work together with Children's Social Care to best meet the needs of prospective and approved foster carers, adopters and those under Special Guardianship Orders. The Council will consider the circumstances of each individual to determine whether a move to alternative accommodation is required to facilitate adoption or fostering of a child to whom the Local Authority has a responsibility. Alternative accommodation will include options in the Private Rented Sector if this is assessed as an affordable and suitable option. It is deemed appropriate that the relevant Children's teams will liaise with the Voids and Lettings Team prior to any agreement in order to ascertain the likelihood of accommodation being secured.



PART 3 – Choice Based Lettings – Homechoice at Reading

This section sets out how Reading Borough Council advertise and make decisions on who a vacant property is allocated to.

The Council advertises properties and applicants are required to bid for those that they are interested in. The bidder who has been assessed as having the greatest need, see section 21, will be offered the property, provided it is suitable for their needs. When considering the suitability of a property, Reading Borough Council takes into account whether the physical attributes of the property (factors such as size of the property or access to the property) will meet the needs of the applicant (which could include, but are not limited to, the number of household members and mobility limitations).

Should an urgent need arise for accommodation, the Council reserves the right to remove property from the Choice Based Lettings system at any point to satisfy this need.

Please be aware that allocation to properties managed by Registered Providers will be subject to their own procedures.

27. Adverts

All adverts will usually include the following information regarding the property:

- Type of tenancy offered.
- Landlord.
- Location.
- Type (flat, bungalow etc.).
- Size (number of bedrooms and bedspaces).
- Floor level and whether or not it has a lift.
- Local amenities.
- Type of heating.
- Whether it has a garden.
- The amount of rent payable.
- Whether it is specialist accommodation, such as purpose built for wheelchair users, Sheltered Accommodation or Elderly Designated Stock, i.e. properties that are only available for those over a certain age.
- If the property is subject to a Local Lettings policy, see section 38.

Reading Borough Council properties and Registered Provider properties will be advertised daily on the Council website as and when they become available. A printed copy of the available properties, which will be correct on the day the information is requested, can be obtained from the Civic Offices.

The adverts will be monitored to ensure that Quota Queues are met, see section 26. At times, advertisements may be restricted to particular groups to ensure that all groups are encouraged to participate in Homechoice at Reading. This is to assist in the development of community cohesion and stability within neighbourhoods. In some circumstances, adverts will be limited to specific applicants. This will be to ensure that the Council is making best use of its stock, particularly where there are large sized family units.

Any vacant property that has adaptations in place will first be advertised for the Adapted Register applicants only. It is important to remember that many adaptations are bespoke for current tenants so may not be an exact fit for any future applicant. If the property does not meet the needs of those on the Adapted Register, it will be advertised for the waiting and transfer list applicants.

28. Bidding

Applicants will be encouraged and supported to make bids for vacant properties online. Applicants can request assistance from the Council for support with the bidding process and can give permission for bids to be made on their behalf by Reading Borough Council staff or anyone that is supporting them. If a bid is placed with the applicant's permission and it is subsequently refused, sanctions may apply, see section 35.

Applicants will have 7 days to place a bid and will be notified of the closing date for bidding on the advert. Applicants will be able to have 3 active bids at any one time. If an applicant is successful for more than 1 property they will be contacted to determine which property they would like to be considered for.

For those applicants who have been given additional priority as they are considered to be homeless or at risk of violence different rules may apply, see section 35.2.

Some Registered Providers will manage the bids placed for accommodation that they advertise in partnership with Reading Borough Council, in line with the Council's Allocations Scheme.

Bids will be evaluated to check whether:

- There have been any changes in circumstances since the date of application (this may result in an applicant's priority changing, and the bid being disregarded); and
- The successful bidder is eligible³ for re-housing.

Where applicants require adaptations, an assessment will be required following any successful bids to ascertain whether the property is suitable for the adaptations required, such as the addition of a level access shower or stairlift, before an offer can be made. If the property does not lend itself to these adaptations any bid will be disregarded. The professional involved, normally an OT, will need to seek landlord permission to make the necessary adaptations. It is not our policy to install level access showers to flats above ground floor. In these situations, we will work with the applicant to find a more appropriate home.

If bidding is unsuccessful, applicants will be notified.

28.1. Bids Overlooked

Applicants may be overlooked for successful bids they have made via Choice Based Lettings if the property is not deemed suitable for their needs, or their needs do not lend themselves to the property. Situations where bids may be overlooked are as follows, this is not an exhaustive list:

- where the property is unsuitable as a result of:
 - not enough bedspaces to accommodate the household
 - if the number of bedrooms meet the need, applicants will not be overlooked if there are additional bedspaces
 - a medical recommendation for a certain type of property and the property where the successful bid has been made does not match the assessment. In these situations, and where medical priority has been awarded the priority may be reassessed.
 - a risk posed to the applicant in and around the area in which the property is situated, or the applicant may pose a risk to others in and around that area:
- where the Council believes, through advice and consultation with other statutory agencies, that a bid for accommodation in a particular property or area could present an unreasonable risk to surrounding residents/tenants or to the applicant.
- Those who make a successful bid and who have had their priority reduced to NPFH as a result of action required to address concerns, as per section 23, and it is considered that the action hasn't been fulfilled, which includes applicants who are in rent arrears
- Applicants who are already under offer to another property
- To enable community cohesion in areas where there is a high level of anti-social behaviour, exploitation or other concerns regarding vulnerable residents
- To properties where Local Lettings Policies are in place

29. Shortlisting

Once the advert closes the bids received are collected and sorted into priority order. Those with the highest level of priority will show at the top of the shortlist. Where there are multiple applicants in the same priority band the shortlist will be in order of effective date, with the oldest first.

³ Eligible – checks will be made to establish identification, immigration status and address before any offer is made.

The Voids and Lettings Team or Sheltered Housing Team will contact each applicant in priority order to arrange a viewing. Some bids may be overlooked, see section 28.1.

30. Viewing

When applicants have been successful in their bid, they will be contacted to view the property.

In order to reduce the amount of time a property is left vacant, an applicant may be expected to view a property with as little as 24 hours' notice. Where possible more notice will be given. Applicants will receive a formal invitation to view a property with a date and time to attend the property, which may be arranged via a telephone call. If the applicant fails to attend the viewing or respond to the invitation within 24 hours, Reading Borough Council will overlook the bid for that property.

Normally the top 3 applicants that have bid for a property will be offered a viewing and asked to state whether they would accept an offer of the accommodation. An offer will be made to the applicant that has been assessed as having the greatest need, see section 21.

If a viewing is arranged, but subsequently the applicant decides not to view the property, they must notify the Voids and Lettings Team within 24 hours of the viewing being arranged

Applicants will be expected to confirm if they wish to accept the property within 24 hours of the viewing, before being made a formal offer of accommodation. Failure to respond within the time scale may result in the bid being disregarded and the property being offered to the next applicant in priority order.

31. Offers

If several applicants who are in the same priority band place bids for the same property, the applicant who has waited the longest within the band will be offered the accommodation, see section 22. If they have been waiting the same length of time in the priority band the property will be offered to the applicant with the earliest date of registration.

Before a formal offer is made, Reading Borough Council will verify the information provided in the Homechoice Registration Form. For verification purposes, applicants will be required to provide specific information such as, but not limited to:

- Proof of eligibility.
- Identification.
- Proof of address.
- Proof of income.
- Proof of capital.
- Evidence of rent account.

If the successful bid has been made on a Registered Providers property, they may require additional information such as an affordability assessment prior to making an offer.

Applicants are required to supply this information within 24 hours of the viewing. If applicants do not provide this information within the time scales, a formal offer will not be made, and their bid may be disregarded.

Reading Borough Council will also consider if the applicant is part of any mandatory group which may need to complete Pre-Tenancy Training, see section 37, prior to a formal offer being made.

If there are any exceptional circumstances that mean that applicants are unable to provide the information requested within 24 hours of the viewing, an extended time can be agreed with the Voids and Lettings Team.

Once all relevant information has been verified a letter will be sent advising the applicant of their offer of accommodation. A date will be arranged for them to sign the Tenancy Agreement which could even be arranged for the same day.

If an applicant refuses the offer or does not provide verification information, the applicant with the next highest level of priority who has viewed the accommodation will be made an offer, for which the verification process will also apply.

Applicants will become non qualifying persons, see section 18.2, from the date that they receive a formal offer of a Part VI Allocation. If they later refuse the property their application will be reinstated from their registration date and their band restored from their effective date.

There may be occasions when Reading Borough Council will have to remove a property from the shortlisting process. This will only happen in exceptional circumstances, for example, where the Council requires a specific property to help satisfy a legal responsibility or for an emergency. Reading Borough Council will aim to avoid removing properties after they have been advertised wherever possible.

32. Homelessness

Applicants owed the main homelessness duty by Reading Borough Council will be expected to actively participate with Homechoice at Reading. Assistance will be given to vulnerable households to help them to bid for accommodation. The Council will distinguish between those applicants who are participating in Homechoice at Reading and those who are not, and different sanctions will apply to both groups.

Bids from homeless households will be reviewed every 4 weeks to determine whether they are actively bidding or participating in the scheme. Non-participation in the scheme is considered to be where households are:

- not making an application to join the Housing Register.
- not bidding.
- selectively bidding which reduces the opportunities for rehousing, such as bidding on particular property types and areas.
- bidding on unsuitable properties.

Those participating in the scheme

Applicants owed the main homelessness duty and who successfully bid for accommodation via Homechoice at Reading will be expected to accept the first property offered to them following their successful bid. If a homeless applicant refuses a reasonable offer of suitable accommodation, then the main homelessness duty will come to an end and no further offer of accommodation will be made to the applicant. The offer will be considered to be the Final Offer under Part VII of the 1996 Housing Act, as amended. If at this time the applicant is in temporary accommodation, they will be issued a Notice to Quit, as the first stage towards gaining possession of the temporary accommodation. The applicant will then be considered to have No Priority for Housing for a period of 1 year, see section 23.

Those not participating in the scheme

If there have been suitable properties advertised and no bids have been placed the applicants will be made a direct offer see section 32. If a direct offer is made, this will be considered to be a Final Offer under Part VII of the 1996 Housing Act, as amended. If the applicant accepts the direct offer the main homelessness duty will end. If the applicant refuses the direct offer the main homelessness duty will end and no further offers of accommodation will be made. If the applicant at this time is in temporary accommodation, they will be given a Notice to Quit, as the first stage towards gaining possession of the temporary accommodation. The applicant will then be considered to have No Priority for Housing for a period of 1 year, see section 23.

33. Direct Offers

A direct offer of accommodation is made when the Council selects a person for a vacant property rather than an applicant participating in Homechoice at Reading by making a bid for the property.

In certain circumstances Reading Borough Council may make a direct offer to applicants. Examples of this are:

- People requiring accommodation on hospital discharge when they have no alternative housing to move to and the discharge is likely to be delayed.
- Applicants that have been accepted for a Management Transfer who are not participating in the scheme despite suitable social housing vacancies arising or who have refused a reasonable offer of accommodation.
- Applicants where the Management Transfer Panel have agreed that they should remain in the property in circumstances where the tenant is no longer residing there. See section 24
- Reading Borough Council tenants whose behaviour is causing severe disruption to neighbours or to the household itself, see section 24.
- Homelessness applicants already placed in temporary accommodation by Reading Borough Council in a property that would otherwise be general needs permanent accommodation (permanent accommodation used as temporary accommodation) where this property is considered suitable as permanent accommodation and will be offered as such.
- Homeless applicants who are not participating in Homechoice at Reading, see section 32.
- Where the attributes of a property are uniquely suitable for a specific household who has an urgent need to move.
- The successful completion of a FIT, see section 11.1.
- After a successful review of suitability, the applicant has moved into the property and is not participating in Homechoice to achieve a move
- Applicants considered as part of a Quota Queue who are not participating in Homechoice at Reading despite suitable social housing vacancies arising, or who have refused an offer of suitable accommodation. Those on a Quota Queue where a specific area or type of property is required may also result in a direct offer being made.
- Decant and Regeneration schemes where the applicants are subject to notice under Ground 10, schedule 2 of the 1985 Housing Act and have been given the opportunity to participate in Homechoice but have failed to do so.
- Any other exceptional or mitigating circumstances.

The Council also reserves the right to make direct offers of accommodation outside the Choice Based Lettings scheme in certain circumstances. Examples include (but are not limited to) those situations where the Council believes it is necessary to intervene on an estate to promote sustainability of an area or promote community cohesion.

Unless there are exceptional circumstances only one direct offer will be made before sanctions will apply, see section 35. It is also important to note that a suitable property previously refused by the applicant may be offered again as a direct offer.

34. Right to Request a Review

Applicants are able to request a review on the following points:

- The decision not to place an applicant on the Housing Register due to their eligibility.
- The decision not to place an applicant on the Housing Register due to the qualification criteria.
- Any decision about the facts of the applicant's case which is likely to have been, or has been taken into account, in considering whether to allocate housing accommodation.
- The decision to remove an application from the Housing Register.
- The suitability of a property which has been offered.
- Management Transfer decisions.

Requests for a review should be made in writing and be marked for the attention of the Voids and Lettings Team Leader within 21 days of the date of the original decision. The request can be made verbally, however it is preferred that the applicant requests a review in writing as the applicant should provide information as to why they disagree with the decision.

The Voids and Lettings Team Leader, or an Officer who is senior to the Officer who has made the original decision, will carry out the review and will aim to make the applicant aware of the outcome of the review within 8 weeks from the date the review request was received by the Council.

If a longer period is needed, the applicant will be consulted about this.

Applicants may be able to challenge some review decisions by judicial review court proceedings. The Council will recommend that the applicant seeks legal advice before taking these steps, or advice from the voluntary sector, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Due to the risk associated with Management Transfer applications, the request for a review will be considered within 21 days of the request, not 8 weeks, as above. See section 24 for more information.

34.1. Suitability of accommodation

If the applicant does not agree that a property offered to them is suitable, they are entitled to request a review of its suitability. Applicants will be advised to move into the accommodation while the review is being considered.

Following the review, the following outcomes may apply:

If it is deemed that the property is not suitable:

- And if the applicant has moved to the accommodation offered, the applicant will be placed into Band 1 so that they can achieve a move at the earliest opportunity. If the applicant subsequently fails to participate in the scheme a direct offer will be made.
- And the applicant has not moved to the accommodation they will remain in their original priority Band and no sanctions will apply.

If it is deemed that the property is suitable:

- And the applicant has moved to the accommodation, they will be expected to remain in this accommodation.
- And the applicant has not moved into the accommodation, sanctions for the refusal will apply, see 35.

If the applicant is homeless this will remain as the final offer of accommodation, which will result in the ending of the statutory homeless duty and any temporary accommodation provided.

35. Refusal and Sanctions

In circumstances where an applicant refuses a suitable offer of accommodation Reading Borough Council will impose sanctions. This is to ensure that any delay does not have an adverse impact on others with a housing need who may want the same accommodation and to prevent property void time increasing.

Refusal of suitable accommodation will be considered as, amongst other things and not limited to:

- The applicant failing to attend a viewing.
- The applicant failing to follow the process, such as completing a Registered Provider application form which, on completion, would have been likely to have led to an offer of accommodation.
- Refusing a property without good reason in the view of the Council.

35.1. Procedure for refusal

If an applicant refuses accommodation as set out in section 35, including a direct offer of accommodation, Officers will look at all the circumstances of the case to decide:

- Whether the offer is suitable and reasonable, and
- Whether the reasons given for refusal are reasonable.

Applicants who wish to refuse a property must notify the Voids and Lettings Team within 24 hours. This is normally done by completing a Refusal form giving comprehensive reasons for their refusal, however details of why the property is being refused can be considered via other means such as email, conversation, etc. Where requested, the Officer carrying out the accompanied viewing of the property will assist applicants in completing the form. This form must be returned to the Voids and Lettings Team within 24 hours of viewing the property.

The Council will notify the applicant in writing if their reason for refusing the property is considered a reasonable or not, within 7 working days.

35.2. Sanctions

Applicants who have refused 3 suitable properties within a 6-month period will be considered as non-qualifying and removed from the Housing Register and cannot reapply for a period of 1 year from the date of the last refusal, see section 18.2.

Certain groups will be limited to fewer refusals, as follows:

- Homeless households will receive 1 suitable offer.
- Management Transfer households will receive 1 suitable offer.
- Quota Queue applicants will receive 1 suitable offer.

Where an applicant from the above groups has refused an offer or direct offer, see section 33, Reading Borough Council reserves the right to reduce the applicant's priority to NPFH for a period of 1 year. When assessing the reasons for refusal, Reading Borough Council will have regard to the applicant's circumstances and the reasons why the offer was made. Each case will be considered on its merits in determining what sanctions will apply.



PART 4 – Our Communities

It is a priority for Reading Borough Council to create and promote sustainable communities. This section sets out how Reading Borough Council will achieve this priority.

36. Estate Management

The Council has a responsibility as a landlord to its estates and their communities. It aims to ensure they are places that people want to live, and that they are free from anti-social behaviour, crime and exploitation.

There are several mechanisms that the Council will employ to support these aims:

- The ability to overlook applicants.
- The ability to remove properties from the scheme.
- The ability to make direct offers of property.
- The use of Local Lettings Policies.
- The ability to advertise properties for particular groups.

- The ability to disclose general anti-social behaviour activity in the area to prospective tenants.
- Using the qualification criteria to prevent those who are unsuitable to be a tenant from accessing the Housing Register.

There are a number of factors that will be considered:

- The vulnerability of applicants and tenants.
- The risk of exploitation.
- History of behaviours within a community.
- Location of the accommodation.
- Risks to and from applicants/tenants.
- Consideration of the most appropriate household for properties, such as female/male only, older children, etc.

The Council may also employ a general discretion not to offer the tenancy to the bidder with the highest priority on the Housing Register. The Council will exercise this discretion by taking into account the range of factors listed above and additional circumstances including (when considered appropriate) the demand for and supply of accommodation and the general housing situation within the borough.

37. Pre-Tenancy Training

Reading Borough Council hopes that any accommodation offered does not fail and wishes for our tenants to have the best opportunity possible to remain in their homes and to sustain their tenancy agreement. To support this Reading Borough Council are able to offer pre-tenancy training, which will enable future tenants to understand their responsibilities for their properties and their community.

Reading Borough Council reserves the right to make completing this training mandatory for certain groups and this information can be found at www.reading.gov.uk.

Any concerns identified as a result of this training will be used to ascertain the right support required to ensure the success of the tenancy.

This training will be available to anyone who wishes to utilise this resource and Reading Borough Council may identify other groups who they will expect to complete this training before an offer of accommodation is made.

38. Local Lettings policies

Local Lettings policies have been developed to help to balance communities, contribute towards community cohesion and sustainability within neighbourhoods and promote tenancy sustainment. Local Lettings policies may be implemented for a range of reasons, including to create a mix of household sizes, to manage housing management issues, such as anti-social behaviour, or to support the creation of a new community within a new build or regeneration scheme.

A separate written policy for each scheme identified as requiring a Local Letting policy will exist that sets out the reason for the policy and the criteria that apply. Criteria could include, restrictions on applicant age, household size, support needs, tenancy issues, and applicants with a history of criminal convictions or anti-social behaviour.

Local Lettings policies in existing properties, will wherever possible be developed in consultation with current tenants and other stakeholders (including the Lead Councillor and Ward Councillors) unless there are mitigating circumstances that require an urgent response.

Properties will normally be advertised clearly stating that a Local Lettings policy applies and giving an overview of the criteria. People applying for housing on estates where Local Lettings policies are in place may be subject to the terms of the specific policy, for example the undertaking of Police checks. The policies are reviewed annually with applicants/tenants and in partnership with the Police and local Councillors to ensure they are still relevant and necessary.

39. Allocations Plan

Each year Reading Borough Council will set out its expectations in relation to the proportion of applicants who will be rehoused from certain groups and from each of the individual lists. This is to ensure that there are fair and proportionate allocations across the groups and also that the Council's priorities and financial obligations are supported. The percentage of lets to each group and lists are reviewed on a regular basis and properties may be advertised for particular groups to help Reading Borough Council deliver on the Allocations Plan. The Allocation Plan identifies the number of properties that will be advertised for each Quota Queue each year.

40. Decants and Regeneration Scheme

In order to facilitate major repairs programmes or to accommodate tenants whose properties become uninhabitable (due to such incidents as a fire or flood) the Council operates a Decant Policy. Whilst these major repair works are being carried out the Council has an obligation to re-house (temporarily) those tenants who are affected. In exceptional circumstances, a tenant who has a high priority for a transfer will be moved into permanent alternative accommodation in order to avoid two moves in a short space of time, or where the regeneration scheme will not provide the size of accommodation required. Where a transfer applicant's home is within a regeneration scheme and the applicant has been given the opportunity to participate within the scheme and has failed to do so, the Council will make a direct offer of accommodation, see section 32.

PART 5 – Alternative and Out of Area Housing Options

Reading Borough Council will not always be able to meet the needs of residents of the borough via the Allocations Scheme. With this in mind, this section sets out alternative options for moving to either social housing, private rented housing or accommodation out of the area.

All of the following are not considered as a nomination or allocation and are included for completeness of housing options. Securing of any accommodation via these routes sits outside of the Allocations Scheme.

It is also important to note that any qualification for future accommodation via Reading Borough Council's Allocation Scheme which is based on residency will be broken if an applicant moves out of the area for a period of time.

41. Reciprocal Arrangements

Generally, the Council will only consider applicants for rehousing who fall within the Allocations Scheme, although there will be times when Reading Borough Council will agree to assist another local authority or a Registered Provider on a reciprocal basis. This would normally be in an emergency situation.

All reciprocal arrangements are discretionary, and the Council reserves the right to decline a request for a reciprocal transfer. All requests will be agreed in conjunction with the Housing Operations Manager and priority for a move will be in line with the Allocations Scheme.

In some circumstances, the Council may agree to accept two smaller units of accommodation in exchange for a larger property with the same number of bedrooms. The reciprocal authority or Registered Provider will be required to provide written commitment to the terms of the reciprocal arrangement. We will treat any agreed reciprocal applicant in line with our Management Transfer applicants, see section 24.

When agreeing any reciprocal transfer the Council would expect a replacement transfer within 1 year.

42. Rent Guarantee Scheme (RGS)

Reading Borough Council promotes the RGS as an option for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and who need financial support to access privately rented accommodation. Landlords joining the scheme offer good quality rented properties and let them through the RGS. Each property is checked prior to letting and vulnerable households are supported to enable them to sustain their accommodation. The RGS works by guaranteeing the rent and the deposit to the landlord. The tenant pays their rent directly to the RGS and contributes towards the deposit by making regular payments to Reading Borough Council over a period of up to three years. Once saved, the deposit will be protected for the tenant's future use, although a landlord may make a claim against the guaranteed deposit at the end of a tenancy if there is loss or damage to the property, beyond fair wear and tear. In addition, if a tenant leaves a property owing rent to Reading Borough Council, any saved deposit may be used to pay off arrears.

On occasions, severely overcrowded secure tenants may consider the RGS as an option to alleviate their housing difficulties. This offer will only be aimed at severely overcrowded households requiring 4+ bedrooms where a private sector tenancy is deemed affordable.

43. Mutual Exchanges

Council or Registered Provider tenants can swap their homes providing their landlord has given permission. This is not an allocation, as defined by section 8.

- Eligibility - the scheme is open to all secure Council tenants and Registered Provider tenants subject to the agreement of their landlords.
- Applications - when two eligible tenants agree to exchange properties, they are each required to submit an application form to the Council's Tenant Services. If one of the parties is a tenant from another landlord, then each will be required to submit an application to the other landlord. The Housing Officer will make a home visit and a decision will be communicated in writing to each party. Applications can be refused on one or more of the grounds set down in Schedule 3 of the Housing Act 1985 and schedule 14 of the Localism Act 2011.

Where applicants are exchanging with a Registered Provider landlord, they are advised to make enquiries regarding the level of security of tenure (type of tenancy agreement) and the type of rent to be paid with the exchanging landlord.

The Homeswapper website at www.homeswapper.co.uk holds a register of tenants looking to exchange their properties.

Rent must be paid up to date before an exchange can take place unless:

- there is a Housing Benefit or Universal Credit claim being processed that will clear the arrears, or
- one or both of the tenants have been approved for a Management Transfer, or
- there is an agreement in place to pay off the outstanding arrears.

If one of the tenants has breached the terms of his or her tenancy agreement, consent to the exchange may be given subject to a condition requiring the tenant to remedy the breach.

Exchanges take place on the basis that they are not a liability to the Council.

44. Assisted Purchase of Properties

There are various schemes, supported by the government, to assist households wishing to become home-owners. Examples of these include Shared Ownership, Help to Buy: Equity Loan, New to Buy: ISA schemes and Right to Buy.

These schemes change to reflect the prevailing climate and therefore details of current schemes available should be obtained from the Voids and Lettings Team on 0118 937 2172 or from the following websites.

[Home ownership - Reading Borough Council](#)

45. Applications to Move Out of Reading

Applicants will need to apply directly to the Local Authority that they wish to move to so that they can apply to be added to their Housing Register. Any such application will be subject to the policies and procedures of the receiving Local Authority.

46. Homefinder UK

Reading Borough Council are able to refer applicants to Homefinder UK, which is a service that advertises social rented properties across England, which the Council in that area find hard to let. This scheme promotes mobility to other areas, providing the opportunity to either retain or gain a social housing tenancy. The majority of accommodation via this scheme is located in the North of England, however property in other areas can become available. Further information can be obtained by contacting the Voids and Lettings Team on 0118 937 2172.



Allocation Scheme – Appendix 1 - Key Worker Definition

A proportion of affordable housing within the Borough is exclusively advertised for Key Workers. This may be scheme specific where the Key Worker definition will vary depending on the grant allocated to Registered Providers for developing the scheme, or it may be a proportion of affordable housing advertised according to local definition.

The Council's Allocation Scheme defines a key worker as someone who:

- Is employed by the public sector or is delivering a public sector duty (Reading Borough Council, Royal Berkshire and Battle Hospital NHS Trust, Royal Berkshire Ambulance NHS Trust, Reading Primary Care Trust, Thames Valley Police, Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service, Reading Buses) and,
- Is delivering an essential public service.
- Is in a post where there are local recruitment and retention problems.
- Is employed to deliver services in Reading.

In Reading this includes (but is not limited to) nurses and other NHS staff, health and care workers carrying out a public services, teachers in schools, further education and Sixth Form colleges, Police Officers and some civilian staff, Social Care workers (which can include Housing Officers), Occupational Therapists, Planners, Fire-fighters, Bus Drivers and ancillary staff.

Allocation Scheme

Priority will be awarded to key workers in line with the overall Housing Register priority matrix.

In developing the annual Allocations Plan, Reading Borough Council will review the number of applications it receives from key workers and then award a percentage of vacant properties to be made available to this group each year. This quota of properties will be in addition to opportunities that may become available specifically for this group in new developments within the borough.

Certain new developments will offer fixed term tenancies for this group. At the end of the fixed term an assessment will be carried out to determine if this accommodation remains suitable and support will be provided to secure an alternative home if this is required.

Reading Borough Council

Allocations Scheme

2026



Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee

10 March 2026



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Highway Maintenance Programme 2026/2027 & 2025/2026 Highway Maintenance Update
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Emma Gee, Executive Director of Economic Growth & Neighbourhood Services
Report author	Sam Shean, Highways & Traffic Services Manager
Lead Councillor	Councillor Karen Rowland, Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety
Council priority	Deliver a sustainable & healthy environment & reduce Reading's carbon footprint
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Committee notes the Department for Transport's (DfT's) Highway Maintenance Award 2026/27 Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport & Highway Maintenance) settlement and provides scheme and spend approval. 2. That the Committee note the progress of year 4 (2025/26) of the Council's additional £8M 5-year (2022/23 to 2026/27) Highway Capital Roads & Pavements Investment Programme. 3. That the Committee notes the completion of the Highway Maintenance 2025/26 DfT Local Transport Block Funded Capital Works Delivery Programme.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the Department for Transport's (DfT's) Highway Maintenance Award 2026/27 Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport & Highway Maintenance) settlement, and to seek scheme and spend approval.
- 1.2 To update the Committee on the progress of year 4 (2025/26) of the Council's additional £8M 5-year (2022/23 to 2026/27) Highway Capital Roads & Pavements Investment Programme.
- 1.3 To provide the Committee with an update on the completion of the Highway Maintenance 2025/26 DfT Local Transport Block Funded Capital Works Programme.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 The Council's approved Corporate Plan sets out the Council's priorities for Reading and provides direction for staff in delivering services to meet the needs of the communities within the Borough whilst working to a budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- 2.2 To secure the most effective use of resources in the delivery of high quality, best value public service.

2.3 To provide a public highway network as safe and comfortable for all users as reasonably practicable having due regard to financial constraints and statutory duties.

3. The Proposal

Background

3.1 As part of Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) an ambitious capital investment programme is being delivered. The Council is investing £8M, over 5-years (2022/23 to 2026/27) in Reading's local residential road and pavement network. There is £1M of Council investment remaining over and above the annual Local Transport Block funding for 2026/2027 from the Department for Transport (£2.873M).

3.2 The Council has and will continue to actively bid for appropriate external funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) and Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to maximise available funding to improve the condition of all highway assets.

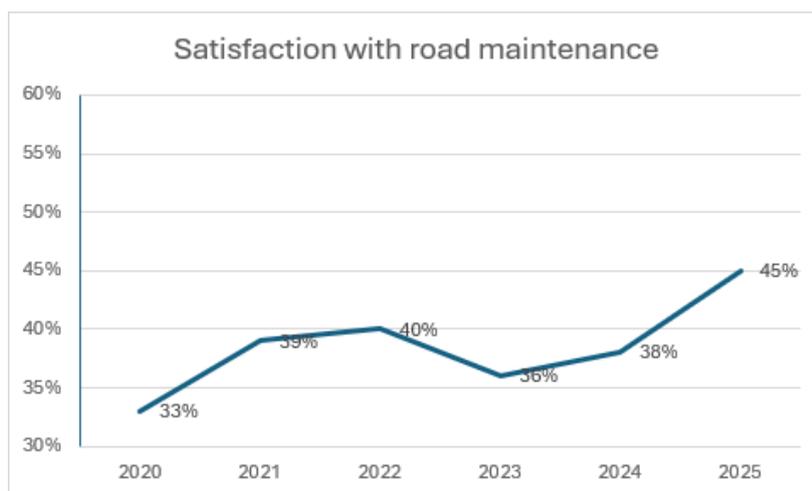
Proposed Programme - Highway Maintenance Spend Proposal 2026/2027

3.3 The Council carried out a Residents' Survey with its Citizen Panel during 2025 as part of the Council's on-going conversation with residents. The aim of the survey was to gather information to inform service delivery.

3.4 Residents were asked their views about local road maintenance and responded as follows:

Satisfaction - 45% (up from 38% last year, see below)

- Dissatisfaction - 40% (down from 46% last year)
- LGA comparison - satisfaction 35% (significantly lower); dissatisfaction 57% (significantly higher)



The NHT Survey confirms the improving satisfaction levels within Reading's road network since the Council investment in road maintenance started in 2020/21 financial year. Over 700 local residential roads (over 55%) have been surfaced since the start of the programme.

3.5 The annual National Highways & Transport MORI Residents Satisfaction Surveys for 2025 has shown that the Council has 138 national indicators being above average (up from 133 last year) and 122 indicators trending up / improving (up from 101), which remains above national trends. Reading remains above the national average for road

condition and in dealing with road repairs. The Council recognises that there has been a huge amount of activity on the public highway this last year, not only during the extensive road resurfacing programmes but by utility companies carrying out urgent and planned repairs.

- 3.6 Our residential (unclassified roads) have improved from 35% green (good) condition to 79% green (good) condition and the on-going investment by the Council will enable maintenance of a steady state of good condition roads. The remaining residential unclassified roads are in an 'Yellow Condition' which are roads that are showing deterioration and will be considered for surfacing during 2026/27 financial year to prolong the life of the road. The Council does not have any entire roads in 'Red Poor Condition' on the residential unclassified 'U' roads, albeit we have clusters of potholes / red on some roads resulting in the road condition indicator showing less than 1% overall Red condition roads on our unclassified (residential local) road network.
- 3.7 The additional DfT LTP Award for Bridges & Carriageways of £2.873M for 2026/27, (including £754k incentive funding which the Council has been awarded), will further assist the Council's ambition in bringing its roads to a good overall condition. Future funding allocations will facilitate maintenance of this good position in future years.

Breakdown of 4-year DfT award for Bridges & Carriageways (2026/27 to 2029/30):

	2026/2027	2027/2028	2028/2029	2029/2030
Baseline Award	£ 2,119,000	£ 2,368,000	£ 2,628,000	£ 3,132,000
Incentive Funding	£ 754,000	£ 1,009,000	£ 1,013,000	£ 1,030,000
Total	£ 2,873,000	£3,377,000	£ 3,641,000	£ 4,162,000

The Council's total DfT Award over the 4 years to 2029/30 is £14,053,000 (including incentive funding element)

- 3.8 This settlement covers general headings of Carriageway Maintenance, Pothole Reduction, and Bridge / Structural Maintenance. The Highway Authority then needs to demonstrate that it has made suitable use of their allocation in accordance with highway needs and within the general criteria for which LTP maintenance funding is allocated.
- 3.9 The Council's additional investment along with the DfT Grant Awards will deliver a total investment of £4.035M in local residential roads, pavements, bridges and structures during financial year 2026/27, as set out in the table below:

	2025/26 Spend (Works Only)	2026/27 Spend Proposal (Works Only)
Residential Roads Surfacing	£4,306,000	£2,040,000
Pavement / Footway Resurfacing	£ 150,000	£200,000
Bridges / Structures / Streetlighting	£ 1,150,000	£ 1,100,000
Streetlighting	£753,000	£495,000
Contribution to Council's Tree Planting programme	£100,000	£ 100,000

Lead Local Flood Reduction	£100,000	£100,000
TOTAL	£6,559,000	£ 4,035,000

3.10 With the funding available Officers have prioritised schemes based on nationally accepted technical assessment processes as well as visual engineering assessments, further detail is provided below:

Major and Residential Road / Carriageway Resurfacing 2026/27 (£2,040,000)

3.11 The provisional programme for category 1 and 2 roads; which are mainly class A and class B classified roads, and roads with high volumes of commercial traffic - Road treatment is prioritised after assessment of carriageways using information from:

- SCANNER surveys which check the structural integrity and residual life of existing carriageways.
- SCRIM (sideways-force coefficient routine investigation machine) surveys to check skidding resistance.

Based on the above assessments the roads/sections of roads listed in Appendix 2 are proposed for treatment during the 2026/27 financial year. These will include 'Resurfacing' of 'classified' and other main roads, requiring the removal of the old road surface and replacement with a new 'warm mix' asphalt or appropriate alternative; as well as 'Preservation' of good condition classified and other main roads in a cost-effective material that extends the life of good condition roads.

To make the most effective use of the budget available, only the sections of the roads with a poor and deteriorating residual life, as identified from the SCANNER surveys and visual engineering assessments, will be prioritised and treated.

3.12 The tender for the programme will include reserve schemes so that in the event that actual costs are lower than current estimates, additional scheme(s) may be undertaken within the available budget. In the event of unforeseen carriageway deterioration on roads not currently on the list, the programme of works will be reviewed and if necessary, a reallocation of funding within the budgets will be made to undertake higher priority carriageway schemes.

3.13 For category 3 unclassified "U" roads (residential and other distributor roads) there is generally no skid or condition information available therefore maintenance priorities are established based on visual condition surveys. The common types of deterioration include, for example, the number of potholes, rutting, the amount of patching and cracking.

Surfacing (a thin microasphalt or surface dressing overlay) is predominantly used on the unclassified "U" local residential road network.

3.14 The visual survey assessment of the road surface condition for residential unclassified 'U' roads was carried out by our Highway Inspector team. The assessment process consists of scoring the carriageway condition against various criteria. Those roads with the highest scores are then subjected to a further engineering assessment and those which score highly again through this process are recommended for inclusion in the next financial year's road surfacing programme, subject to budget availability.

3.15 Based on the above, roads taken from the list of proposed schemes, currently 71 roads / sections of road, as detailed in Appendix 2 will be delivered during 2026/27. The

estimated costs are based on current contract rates. A tender will be let and awarded with works expected to take place during the summer months of 2026. The exact number of roads will depend on the tender return rates.

- 3.16 In the event of unforeseen carriageway deterioration outside of the scope of normal maintenance work, the programme of works will be reviewed and if necessary, a reallocation of funding within the budget will be made to facilitate higher priority carriageway schemes.
- 3.17 Due to the size of the 5-Year Council investment programme (2022/27), the Council continues to engage Statutory Undertakers / utility companies early to reduce the risk of newly resurfaced roads being dug up and also ensure that other planned major transport schemes are considered within the programme. The Council will also issue Section 58 Notices on the Major Classified Roads that are programmed for resurfacing. These legal notices help to protect the new surface as far as reasonably possible by preventing works by utility companies for up to 2-years, unless in an emergency or for a new connection.
- 3.18 A number of cycle routes that are located on residential road carriageways have been included within the proposed roads resurfacing programme.
- 3.19 It should also be noted that a number of local cycle routes are on classified main roads and will be prioritised for resurfacing. The annual highway maintenance programme has also considered improvements to routes identified in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

Pavement / Footway Resurfacing (£200,000)

- 3.20 Potential footway surfacing and resurfacing schemes are identified as a result of visual condition surveys. Assessment of pavement surfaces are carried out on a rolling programme. The visual condition surveys are carried out at the same time as the cyclical road safety inspections with the frequency matching the highway inspection regime which depends on the hierarchical status of the road, with 3 monthly inspections of classified 'A Class' roads to 18 months inspection for residential 'U' unclassified roads. The assessment process consists of scoring the pavement condition against various criteria; those pavements with the highest scores, , are recommended for inclusion within the next financial year's Pavement Surfacing Programme, subject to budget availability. Refer to Appendix 2 for the proposed 2026/27 programme.
- 3.21 Officers will continue to split the focus of the Council's capital investment pavement programme between surfacing and/or reconstructing damaged pavements/stretches of pavements. Surfacing is done using a slurry sealant, rejuvenator or equivalent product, as this cost-effective process provides a new 'veneer' over the surface that seals and extends the life of pavements, thereby accelerating the Pavement Surfacing Programme. Both solutions will be delivered by the Council's in-house Highway Works Team.
- 3.22 The Council will continue to offer residents discounted vehicle crossings in residential roads where pavement works are being carried out, provided they are requested in advance and satisfy the Council's Vehicle Crossing Policy. To date we have installed 56 vehicle crossings as part of the pavement programmes, which aids affordability for the residents of Reading.
- 3.23 The Council is committed to reducing carbon as far as reasonably practicable with all contracts work, including innovation and highway tree planting where appropriate (considering underground services and sight line visibility/safety requirements), to support the Council's carbon reduction and bio-diversity ambitions. To date 615 trees have been planted, with a further 300 planned for winter 2026. The Council successfully trialled and purchased a fully electric road marking machine that uses cold applied, low carbon MMA (Methyl Methacrylate), as well as low carbon bitumen preservation materials that will

become 'business as usual' going forward. The Council will continue to explore, trial and bring low carbon alternatives to Reading.

3.24 The Council will continue to install pedestrian dropped crossings at road junctions on the pavements being resurfaced to improve accessibility for all users of the public highway. The Council recognises that Reading is a long-established town with historically older roads that were built at a time when accessibility was not considered during the design process. The Pavement Programme is an ideal opportunity to address this and to date 101 pedestrian crossings have been installed at road junctions.

3.25 There are roads which repeatedly do not meet the criteria for inclusion within the major carriageway or residential roads surfacing programmes but would benefit from other maintenance treatment(s) to extend the life of the asset. Examples of such maintenance works are explained in more detail below:

- Following a SCRIM (Sideway-force Coefficient Routine Investigation Machine) survey, where a carriageway surface appears, overall, to be in a good condition but would benefit from a surface preservation and retexturing to improve/restore skid resistance, extending the life of the road. This process would prove to be a cost-effective treatment, when compared with full scale resurfacing, enabling more roads to be treated.
- There are a number of concrete roads across the Borough which have previously been overlain with a thin flexible surfacing course. Over time this surfacing has locally worn away leaving a 'scabbed' surface. Typically, these areas do not meet the Council's current defect investigatory level to trigger repairs and if the underlying concrete slabs are in a stable condition, they are unlikely to increase in depth. Although such deterioration is aesthetically not pleasing, if the underlying concrete slabs are in reasonable condition, such roads do not score as highly as other roads for programmed maintenance work. Nevertheless, these roads would benefit from an appropriate treatment whereby the existing surfacing is either rejuvenated or replaced to not only improve the running surface but to also seal and protect the underlying concrete slabs, in turn, extending the life expectancy of these roads. Wensley Road was fully resurfaced in a proprietary surfacing product which is suitable for concrete roads.
- There are also examples of localised carriageway deterioration where the surfacing and/or sub-structure show signs of wear and tear in specific areas but not extensive enough to justify full-scale maintenance work to the complete carriageway area. In these situations, substantially sized patching, whether in the form of a surfacing only repair, a surfacing and base course repair or perhaps a greater depth full reconstruction repair, can rectify the issue locally and help to extend the overall life expectancy of the complete road.

Bridges & Structures 2026/2027 Programme (£ 1,100,000)

3.26 The Council has maintenance responsibility for around 80 bridges and 300 other structures. Each structure is inspected in line with the Code of Practice for Highway Structures. Based on these inspections, priority for works within the Capital Programme are determined and a rolling 5-year programme is developed and updated annually. Appendix 1 shows the bridges and structures schemes delivered by this investment during 2025/26. The proposed 2026/27 bridge and structures programme deliverable within the budget is listed in Appendix 2. Whilst these schemes are all high priority, they will not necessarily be completed in the order they are listed, as other factors must be considered when developing a scheme and programme to ensure they are achievable within the timescale / financial year. The current bridge backlog is managed by risk assessment, monitoring and if necessary interim measures, including implementing a weight limit, repair works and localised strengthening.

- 3.27 The Council continues to seek DfT funding to address the IDR bridge bearings and Berkeley Avenue strengthening schemes.

Street Lighting - LED streetlighting Capital Programme Update (£495,000)

- 3.28 The LED streetlighting upgrade programme has upgraded all the Council's standard streetlighting assets and delivered over 60% annual energy consumption savings to date. The Council's additional investment also addressed those units not included within the original LED programme, including conversion of all sign lighting and some subway lighting and bespoke lighting units.
- 3.29 The capital investment is to be used to address older subway lighting and ageing high mast lighting columns, including improving efficiency to reduce energy consumption, reduce energy costs and lower carbon levels.
- 3.30 Street lighting continues to be managed according to Highways asset management principles, inventory management and life cycle planning will be managed using the lighting module of the WDM system to coordinate with the pavement management and roads maintenance system. The system support in future will be web based self-serve reporting of street lighting faults via a dedicated portal, improving customer reporting and reducing the reliance on the current communication channels.
- 3.31 The Council reviewed its streetlighting specifications to reduce the brightness of the LED lanterns from 4,000k (kelvin), to 3,000k and below to reduce environmental impact.

Lead Local Flood Alleviation Grant (LLFA) Funding (£100,000)

- 3.32 The capital investment programme will address minor flooding / ponding issues experienced within the Borough, including ponding at pedestrian dropped kerb crossings, historic poor drainage during intensive rainfall events, and small 'pocket garden' style installations to reduce the risk of flooding, improve biodiversity and improve water quality.

No announcement has yet been made by DEFRA on the Lead Local Flood Alleviation grant for 2026/27. However, should appropriate funding become available this will be reported accordingly to a future Housing Neighbourhood & Leisure Committee or Strategic Environment Planning & Transport Committee as appropriate.

- 3.33 There are several costly flood risk/surface water management priority schemes identified for Reading under the 'Local Flood Risk Management Strategy' and the 'Surface Water Management Plan'. However, given that these are very costly schemes and, unfortunately, are unsupported by appropriate funding at this moment in time, it is highly unlikely that they will form part of the 2026/27 works programme. It is noted that responsibility for Main Rivers (Rivers Thames & Kennet) and 'Critical Ordinary Water Courses' (COW) remains with the Environment Agency. The Council are responsible for 'Ordinary Water Courses' and ditches.
- 3.34 Any future Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) grant will be used to address high flood risk sites and protect vulnerable properties. The Council will continue to carry out the annual ditch cleaning programme and to investigate/progress further schemes identified through flood modelling. A detailed list of works/schemes will be presented to this Committee for approval at a future meeting during the year to keep Councillors updated.

Highway Maintenance Delivery Update 2025/2026

- 3.35 During 2025/26 the Council has carried out an extensive works programme of carriageway resurfacing, carriageway preservation surfacing, surfacing of unclassified 'U' residential roads, footway/pavement resurfacing, streetlighting replacement of ageing

columns and LED lantern replacement, as well as a bridges/structural maintenance programme.

Year- 4 of the Council's 5-Year Capital Investment in Local Roads & Pavements

- 3.36 The Council awarded competitive tenders to deliver up to 185 local residential 'micro asphalt' and 'warm mix asphalt' major roads, including concrete road surfacing, over a 2-year period (2024/26), with 80 major roads and 20 residential micro roads delivered during 2025/26, Appendix 1 refers.
- 3.37 The Highways & Drainage (H&D) in-house operations team carried out extensive pre-patching in advance of the residential road surfacing programme. Any defect that warranted attention, irrespective of its depth was repaired, thereby providing added structural integrity to the road construction.
- 3.38 It was intended to focus the Council's Capital Investment Programme on resurfacing and/or reconstructing damaged pavements/stretches of pavement in 2025/2026 using the Council's in-house Highway Teams, as they are a competitive and cost-effective team who are experienced in delivering patching and minor road and pavement schemes.
- 3.39 The residential pavement / footway schemes programme commenced in early April 2025 and is due for completion by the end of March 2026, refer to Appendix 1.

Bridge/Structural Maintenance - Financed by the annual DfT LTP Award (2025/26)

- 3.40 A range of schemes were completed including strengthening and refurbishment of the Orbit Footbridge, application of footway anti-slip material on Reading Bridge Footways, bridge inspections and assessments, managing the abnormal loads, planned maintenance and reactive maintenance response.
- 3.41 Appendix 1 refers to the works programme delivered by the Highway Maintenance 2025/2026 award from the DfT Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport & Highway Maintenance) settlement.
- 3.42 Appendix 1 satisfies the Grant Determination requirements on the use of the funding allocation by the DfT for Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport & Highway Maintenance) 2025/2026 settlement.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1 Reading Borough Council's vision is:

To help Reading realise its potential – and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success.

- 4.2 The Council's new Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:

- Healthy Environment
- Thriving Communities
- Inclusive Economy

- 4.3 These themes are underpinned by "Our Foundations" explaining the ways we work at the Council:

- People first
- Digital transformation
- Building self-reliance
- Getting the best value

- Collaborating with others
- 4.4 Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the [Council's website](#). These priorities and the Corporate Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers). Transport is the biggest greenhouse gas emitting sector in the UK accounting for around 27% of total carbon emissions. As set out in our Climate Emergency Strategy this figure is lower in Reading with transport accounting for around 20% of carbon emissions, however significant investment in sustainable transport solutions is vital in order to respond to the Climate Emergency declared by the Council in February 2019 and to help achieve our target of a carbon neutral Reading by 2030.
- 5.2 A Climate Impact Assessment has been completed which suggests a 'net medium positive' impact arising from adoption of the Transport Strategy.
- 5.3 The Council is committed to a tree planting programme to increase canopy cover, improve biodiversity and reduce localised flooding. The Council continues to commit Highways Capital Programmes towards this initiative.
- 5.4 The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy, which was endorsed by the Council in November 2020, highlights the importance of adapting to climate impacts as well as reducing the emissions which are driving climate change. The Council will regularly review design standards, in conjunction with industry bodies, to take into account the extreme weather events (both extreme heat and extreme cold) to ensure sustainability of the public highway network.

6. Community Engagement and Information

- 6.1 The public can report highway defects to the Council via the Council's Web Page [Report a road or street problem - Reading Borough Council](#), the 'Love Clean Reading App', or by email Highways@reading.gov.uk. These include drains, streetlights, road and structures condition concerns, which are assessed and included within the annual review of the highway assets that inform the 'Annual Status and Option Reports' (ASOR) with the proposed high priority schemes brought to Committee for consideration and approval should they meet the assessment criteria.
- 6.2 An extensive Communications Strategy was developed to inform residents of the investment and improvement by the Council at the start of year1 local residential roads and pavement programme and has been implemented in each subsequent year. The Communications Plan included residents' letters, an infographic to visually explain the surfacing process, as well as a colouring competition. An extensive and proactive social media strategy continues to be undertaken by the Council's Communication Team.
- 6.3 An annual review of the communication strategy is carried out following feedback from residents and Local Ward Councillors and a 'lessons learnt' exercise is carried out each year following the resurfacing programme and improvements incorporated within future work programmes

7. Equality Impact Assessment

- 7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2 The Highway Maintenance programme 2026/2027 consists of improvement work to the Council's existing public highway network and will be making improvements to existing highway assets. The Council recognise that Reading is an older town and will continue to invest in pedestrian dropped kerb crossings at junctions as part of the capital investment programmes to improve access for all residents of Reading and users of the public highway.

7.3 There is no overall change to service delivery at this time, and all users will have a safe public highway. Should any future updates/amendments be required, which result in service delivery changes, an equality impact assessment will be carried out.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

There are no other relevant issues to report

9. Legal Implications

9.1 The Borough Council, as Highway Authority, has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safe passage along a highway.

9.2 The Council as Lead Local Flood Authority, has a duty under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 to reduce the risk of flooding.

10. Financial Implications

10.1 The Highway Maintenance Programme 2026/2027 (Spending Table Item 3.9 refers) will be fully funded by the following:

- Year – 5 of the £8M Council Funded 5-Year (2022-2027) Residential Roads & Pavements Investment Programme
- The Local Transport Block Funding (Integrated Transport & Highway Maintenance) settlement for 2026/2027).
- The DEFRA Lead Local Flood Alleviation Grant (LLFA) Funding 2026/2027 (tbc).
- The capital works programmes will be tendered via open public tender to achieve procurement compliance in line with the Public Contract Regulations 2015, value for money for Reading.

11. Timetable for Implementation

11.1 Tenders for the road resurfacing programmes will be advertised in Spring 2026 and awarded early June 2026 to ensure works are carried out during the drier summer months.

11.2 The delivery of the 'Roads Resurfacing and Surfacing' programme will be during the 2026/27 financial year.

11.3 Delivery of the Capital Bridges programme will be during the 2026/27 Financial Year.

12. Background Papers

12.1 There are none.

Appendices

1. Appendix 1: 2025/26 Programme Delivered

2. Appendix 2: Proposed 2026/27 Delivery Programme

APPENDIX 1: 2025/26 Programme Delivered

- **Major Road Resurfacing Programme**

HOT ROLLED / STONE MASTIC ASPHALT RESURFACING 2025/26			
No.	Road name	Section	Ward
1	Berkeley Avenue	Pell Street to St Saviours Road	Coley / Katesgrove
2	IDR Inner Relief Road	Slip road to Broad St Mall adj to Hexagon	Abbey
3	IDR Inner Relief Road	onslip o/s Hostel from Castle Hill Southbound	Abbey
4	Duke Street	Kings Road to Yield Hall Place	Abbey
5	Queens Road	Watlington Street to Sidmouth Street	Abbey / Redlands
6	Rose Kiln Lane	Boulton Road to river bridge	Whitley / Katesgrove
7	Market Place/High Street	The Forbury to Kings Road	Abbey
8	Caversham Park Road	Kingsway to Caversham Park Primary School	Emmer Green
9	Rose Kiln Lane	Admirals Court to A33	Coley
10	Church Road	Church Street to St Annes Road	Caversham
11	Wokingham Road	Palmer Park Avenue to Grange Avenue	Park
12	Burghfield Road	Underwood Road to railway bridge	Southcote
13	Kiln Road	Peppard Road to borough boundary	Emmer Green
14	Craven Road	London Road to o/s 2 Erleigh Road	Redlands
15	Craven Road	Addington Road to outside main entrance of hospital	Redlands
16	Oxford Road	Beresford Road to Battle Library	Battle
17	Greyfriars Road	Full extent	Abbey
18	Grovelands Road	Waverley Road to Windrush Way	Norcot
19	Bath Road	Burghfield Road to lamp col 3410 adj Prospect Park	Southcote
20	Oxford Road	Battle Library to Constitution Road	Norcot / Battle
21	Oxford Road	Norcot Road to Constitution Road	Norcot / Battle
22	Whiteknights Road	Eastern Avenue to Hamilton Road	Park
23	Honey End Lane	Cockney Hill to Bath Road	Norcot / Southcote
24	Forbury Road	Kenavon Drive to Kings Road Southbound only	Thames / Abbey
25	IDR Inner Relief Road	onslip from Chatham Street Northbound	Thames / Abbey
26	Tilehurst Road	Liebenrood Road to o/s 380	Norcot / Battle / Southcote
27	Henley Road	Micklands Road to 120m West	Emmer Green
28	Caversham Road	Railway bridge to Tudor Road	Abbey
29	B3270	junc Whitley Wood Lane for 250m West	Whitley
30	Prospect Street, Caversham	Full extent	Caversham
31	Tilehurst Road	Connaught Road to Western Elms Avenue	Battle / Southcote
32	Chapel Hill	Normanstead Road for 145m West	Tilehurst
33	London Road	De Beauvoir Road to Eldon Road	Redlands
34	Hemdean Road	Church Street to Oakley Road	Caversham

35	Eldon Road	Full extent	Redlands
36	Briants Avenue	Full Extent	Caversham / Thames
37	Forbury Road	Vastern Road roundabout to Kenavon Drive roundabout eastbound only	Thames / Abbey
38	Whitley Wood Lane	Whitley Wood Roundabout to Borough Boundary	Whitley
39	Caversham Park Road	Henley Road to Lowfield Road	Emmer Green
40	Norcot Road	School Road to Sona Gardens	Kentwood / Tilehurst
41	Caversham Park Road	Littlestead Close to Bramber Mews	Emmer Green
42	Overdown Road	Rissington Close to Carlisle Road	Kentwood
43	London Road	Cumberland Road to Cholmeley Road	Park
44	Caversham Park Road	Kiln Road to Birchwood Close	Emmer Green
45	Shaw Road	Full extent	Coley
46	Peppard Road	Yarnton Close to borough boundary	Emmer Green
47	Gosbrook Road	Prospect Street to Patrick Road	Caversham / Thames
48	Peppard Road	o/s 57 to Picton Way	Caversham / Emmer Green
49	Silver Street/Mount Pleasant	Full extent	Katesgrove
50	Christchurch Road	Sutherland Avenue to The Mount	Redlands
51	Northumberland Avenue	Christchurch Gardens to Newcastle Road	Katesgrove / Redlands
52	Norcot Road	Broomfield Road to Oxford Road	Norcot / Kentwood
53	Richmond Road	Kidmore Road to Albert Road	Caversham Heights
54	Cockney Hill	Full extent	Norcot
55	Cavendish Road	Full extent	Emmer Green
56	Donkin Hill	Full extent	Caversham
57	Ashmere Terrace	Full extent	Battle
58	Southcote Road	Full extent	Southcote
59	IDR Inner Relief Road	offslip to Chatham Street Southbound	Abbey
60	Alexandra Road	Elmhurst Road to Addington Road	Redlands
61	De Montfort Road	Full extent	Thames
62	West Fryerne	Full extent	Southcote
63	Cumberland Road	Full extent	Park
64	Katesgrove Lane	Full extent	Katesgrove
65	The Triangle/Walnut Way	Full extent	Tilehurst
66	Gillette Way	Full extent	Whitley
67	Coley Avenue	Bath Road to Berkeley Avenue	Coley
68	Eldon Square	Full extent	Redlands
69	Meadow Road	Full extent	Thames
70	Pepper Lane	Wokingham Road to borough boundary	Redlands / Church
71	Basingstoke Road	Rose Kiln Lane to Long Barn Lane	Katesgrove / Church / Whitley
72	Redlands Road	Elmhurst Road to Upper Redlands Road	Redlands

73	Park Lane	Borough boundary to water tower	Tilehurst
74	Woodcote Road	Highmoor Road to Richmond Road	Caversham Heights
75	Priest Hill	Full extent	Caversham
76	Southampton Street	Full extent	Katesgrove
77	Upper Redlands Road	Eastern Avenue to Elmhurst Road	Redlands
78	Whitley Wood Road	Whitley Wood Lane to Northumberland Avenue	Whitley
79	Whitley Wood Road	Whitley Wood Lane roundabout to Swallowfield Drive	Whitley
80	Station Road	Forbury Road to Friar Street	

MICRO ASPHALT ROAD SURFACING 2025/26

No.	Road name	Section	Ward
1	Cardinal Close	Wolsley Road to cul-de-sac	Thames
2	St Stephens Close	Wolsley Road to cul-de-sac	Thames
3	The Willows	Wolsley Road to cul-de-sac	Thames
4	Filey Road	Chomeley Road to Manchester Road	Park
5	Muirfield Close	Fatherson Road to cul-de-sac	Redlands
6	Frilsham Road	Southcote Lane to Ashampstead Road	Southcote
7	Tidmarsh Street	Oxford Road to Stone Street	Battle
8	Pangbourne Street	Oxford Road to Stone Street	Battle
9	Ivydene Road	Pangbourne Street to CDS End	Battle
10	Stone Street	Ivydene Road to Wigmore Lane	Battle
11	Richmond Road	Wantage Road to ElmLodge Avenue	Battle
12	Howard Street	Oxford Road to Baker Street	Abbey
13	Surley Row	Rotherfield Way to 65 Surley Row	Caversham Heights
14	Hunters Chase	Kidmore Road to Bollards	Caversham Heights
15	Tredegar Road	Surely Row to Bollards	Caversham Heights
16	Fawley Road	Southcote Lane to CDS End	Southcote
17	Craig Avenue	Grovelands Road to Strathy Close	Norcot
18	Quantock Avenue	Montpelier Drive to CDS End	Emmer Green
19	Eltham Avenue	Kingsway to CDS End	Emmer Green
20	Henley Road Service Road	Henley Road to Henley Road	Emmer Green

Bridges Schemes

1	Orbit Footbridge
2	Bridge Assessment Programme
3	Principle Inspection Programme
4	Bridge Monitoring Programme
5	Culvert Inspections and Assessment Programme

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APPENDIX 2: 2026/27 Proposed Programme

- **Road Resurfacing Programme**

Please note that the list below is subject to the following:

- The engineering assessment before final prioritisation
- Review against planned utility and development works to avoid clashes
- In order of road class (A, B, C or U) not in a priority order
- Priority will need be focused on the A roads as these are in most need of treatment.

No.	Location	Extent	Class	Ward
1	Rose Kiln Lane	A33 Northbound Only - Jun Island Road To 175m South	A	Whitley
2	Bath Road	Side Of 2 Hogarth Ave To 100m West	A	Southcote
3	Crown Street	Full Length	A	Katesgrove
4	Vastern Road	Os Clearwater Court For 105m Eastbound Only	A	Thames
5	Shinfield Road	O/S 132 To O/S 120	A	Church
6	A33 Relief Road	Northbound Only - 127m Northbound To Jun Imperial Way	A	Whitley
7	IDR Inner Relief Road	Onslip From Southampton Street	A	Katesgrove
8	Bath Road	S/O 1 New Lane Hill To 100m Eastbound	A	Southcote
9	Caversham Road	IDR - Northbound Only Jun A33 To 106m Northbound	A	Coley / Katesgrove
10	Berkeley Avenue	Access Road From Petrol Station To S/O St Saviours Church	A	Coley
11	Southampton Street	Jun Crown St To Roundabout	A	Katesgrove
12	Caversham Road	IDR - Northbound Only From Thorn Walk To Jun Great Knollys St	A	Abbey
13	Bath Road	Jun Brunswick St To Jun Harrow Ct	A	Coley
14	Shinfield Road	O/S 52 To O/S 74	A	Church
15	St Peters Hill	Jun Darell Rd To 204m Southbound	A	Caversham Heights
16	Wokingham Road	Borough Boundary To O/S Fire Station	A	Park
17	Church Road	St Annes Rd To The Warren	A	Caversham
18	Kings Road	Fatherson Rd To Kingsgate St Eastbound Only	A	Thames / Redlands
19	Bath Road	O/S The Wren School For 144m	A	Southcote
20	Henley Road	Anglefield Rd To Lower Henley Rd	A	Caversham
21	London Road	Cholmeley Rd To O/S 359	A	Park
22	Woodcote Road	Jun Darell Rd To O/S 5	A	Caversham Heights
23	Shinfield Road	Jun Whitley Wood Rd To O/S 194	A	Church
24	Christchurch Road	The Mount To O/S 4 Shinfield Rd	A	Redlands / Church
25	Upper Woodcote Road	O/S 183 To O/S 193	A	Caversham Heights
26	Woodcote Road	South Jun Highmoor Rd To O/S 45	A	Emmer Green
27	Henley Road	Micklands Rd to Montfort Gate	A	Caversham / Emmer Green
28	Woodcote Road	Highmoor Road to Richmond Road	A	Caversham Heights
29	Henley Road	Chiltern Road and Lower Henley Road	A	Caversham / Emmer Green

30	IDR Relief Road	The Oracle roundabout under the flyover	A	Abbey / Katesgrove
31	Reading Road	George St, Cav Jun Gosbrook Rd To Jun Queens Rd	B	Thames
32	Basingstoke Road	Roundabout Jun Imperial Way To O/S 563	B	Whitley
33	Gosbrook Road	O/S 333 To Jun Mill Rd	B	Caversham / Thames
34	Gosbrook Road	Jun George St To O/S 301	B	Thames
35	Peppard Road	O/S 384 To Borough Boundary	B	Emmer Green
36	Basingstoke Road	Craddock Rd To Surrey Rd	B	Katesgrove
37	Peppard Road	O/S 57 to Picton Way	B	Caversham / Emmer Green
38	High Street	Full Length	C	Abbey
39	Gun Street	Minster St O/S Telephone Exchange To O/S 14 Gun St	C	Abbey
40	Honey End Lane	Tilehurst Rd To Roundabout (Section O/S Prospect Hospital)	C	Norcot / Southcote
41	Erleigh Road	Addington Rd To Denmark Rd	C	Redlands
42	The Forbury	Jun Forbury Rd To O/S St Laurences Church	C	Abbey
43	Erleigh Road	Jun London Rd To O/S 1A	C	Redlands
44	Richfield Avenue	East Side Of Jun Tessa Rd To Cow Ln	C	Thames
45	Eastern Avenue	North Side Of Crescent Rd To Jun Early Hill Rd	C	Redlands / Park
46	The Mount	O/S 23 To O/S 39	C	Caversham Heights / Caversham
47	Portman Road	O/S 24A To 203m East	C	Battle
48	Caversham Park Road	Jun Queensway To Tennis Courts	C	Emmer Green
49	Northumberland Avenue	Jun Hexham Rd To Long Barn Lane	C	Katesgrove / Redlands / Church
50	Bridge Street	Full Length	C	Abbey
51	Redlands Road	South Of Jun Allcroft Rd To 356m North	C	Redlands
52	Kidmore End Road	Borough Boundary To O/S 152	C	Emmer Green
53	Chapel Hill	Normanstead Road for 145m west	C	Tilehurst
54	Overdown Road	Rissington Cl to Carlisle Rd	C	Kentwood
55	Redlands Road	Elmhurst Road to Upper Redlands Road	C	Redlands
56	Market Place / High Street	Bollards to Kings Road	C	Abbey
57	Friar Street	Full Length	C	Abbey
58	Blagrove Street	Friar Street to Valpy Street	C	Abbey
59	Valpy Street	Full Length	C	Abbey
60	Cumberland Road	Full Length	U	Park
61	Southcote Road	Full Length	U	Southcote
62	De Montfort Road	Full Length	U	Thames
63	The Triangle/Walnut Way	Full Length	U	Tilehurst
64	Meadow Road	Full Length	U	Thames
65	Katesgrove Lane	Full Length	U	Katesgrove

66	Manor Farm	Longships Way to Basingstoke Road	U	Whitley
67	The Warren	Full Length	U	Caversham Heights
68	Sutton Walk Car Park area	Full Length	U	Redlands
69	Palmer Park Ave	Wykeham Road to Borough Boundary	U	Park
70	Great Knolly's Street	Bollards to A329	U	Abbey
71	Somerstown Court	Parking area	U	Abbey

- **Preservation Road Surfacing Programme (extending the life of 'Good Condition' Roads using cost effective solution)**

No.	Road name	Section	Classes	Ward
1	Park Lane	Full Length	C	Tilehurst
2	Bath Road	Burghfield Road to Hogarth Avenue	A	Southcote
3	Water Road	Tilehurst Rd to Windrush Way	C	Norcot
4	Woodcote Road	Darell Road to Highmoor Road	A	Caversham Heights
5	Oxford Road	Gordon Place to Shaftesbury Road	A	Norcot / Battle
6	Russell Street	Bath Road to Tilehurst Rd	C	Abbey
7	Tilehurst Road	Russell Street to Western Elms Avenue	C	Coley
8	Berkeley Avenue	Ashley Road to Portway Close	A	Coley
9	Sidmouth Street	London Road to Queens Road	C	Katesgrove
10	Pell Street	Elgar Road to Sherman Road	A	Katesgrove
11	Christchurch Road	Sutherland Avenue to Basingstoke Road	A	Redlands / Katesgrove
12	Basingstoke Road	Christchurch Road to Shenstone Road	B	Katesgrove
13	Portman Road	Bridgewater Close for 500m east	C	Battle
14	IDR (Southbound exit offslip towards Castle Street)	Full Length	A	Abbey
15	IDR (Eastbound exit offslip towards Bridge Street)	Full Length	A	Abbey
16	Forbury Road	Kings Road to Kenavon Drive roundabout	A	Abbey / Thames
17	Shinfield Road	Whitley Wood Road to Elm Road	A	Church
18	Elm Road	Shinfield Road to Borough Boundary	B	Church
19	Wokingham Road	(Holmes Road to Melrose Avenue)	C	Park
20	Oxford Road	Russell Street to Beresford Road	A	Abbey / Battle / Coley
21	Liebenrood Road	Full Length	C	Southcote
22	Beresford Road	Full Length	C	Battle
23	Little Johns Lane	Full Length	U	Battle
24	Upton Road	Full Length	U	Norcot
25	St Annes Road	Full Length	U	Caversham
26	Whitley Street	Full Length	A	Katesgrove
27	Trafford Road	Full Length	U	Thames
28	Kentwood Hill	Full Length	C	Kentwood
29	Eaton Place	Full Length	U	Abbey

30	Bedford Road	Oxford Road to Chatham Street	A	Abbey
31	Christchurch Gardens & Vicarage Road	Full Length	C	Katesgrove / Redlands
32	Cholmeley Road	Filey Rd to London Rd	U	Park
33	De Beauvoir Road	Full Extent	U	Redlands
34	Alexandra Road	London Rd to Erleigh Rd	U	Redlands
35	Elmhurst Road	Full Extent	U	Redlands / Church
36	Francis Street	Hill St to Sherman Rd	U	Katesgrove
37	Somerstown Court	Off Prospect St	U	Abbey
38	Halls Road	Full Extent	U	Tilehurst
39	Pierces Hill	Full Extent	C	Kentwood / Tilehurst
40	Oakley Road	Kidmore Rd to Hemdean Rd	U	Thames
41	Kings Street	Minster St to Duke St	C	Abbey
42	Norcot Road	Church End Ln to Broomfield Rd	C	Norcot / Kentwood / Tilehurst
43	Star Road	Lower Henley Rd to Gosbrook Rd	U	Caversham
44	Richfield Avenue	Caversham Road to Cow Lane	C	Thames
45	Lowfield Road	Full Length	C	Emmer Green
46	IDR Inner Relief Road	Castle Street off slip North	A	Coley
47	Honey End Lane	Cockney Hill to The Meadway	C	Norcot / Southcote
48	Shinfield Road	South of Beech Rd for 200m North	A	Church
49	Rose Kiln Lane	Southbound from Matalan Roundabout	A	Coley
50	Hogarth Avenue	Bath Road to Lingholm Close	U	Southcote
51	Shinfield Road	North of Wellington Ave Junc	A	Redlands / Church
52	Church Road	200m west from St Annes Rd	A	Caversham
53	Kidmore End Road	Brooklyn Drive to Crawshay Drive	C	Emmer Green
54	Bath Road	Castle Hill roundabout to Harrow Court	A	Coley / Abbey
55	The Meadway	Park Grove to 300m west	C	Norcot / Southcote
56	A33 Relief Road (Northbound)	Link between Rose Kiln Lane & IDR	A	Coley
57	Peppard Road	Cedar Wood Crescent to Fallowfield Close	B	Caversham / Emmer Green
58	Church End Lane	Full Extent	U	Tilehurst
59	Russell Street	Full Extent	C	Abbey
60	Lower Henley Road	Star Road to Henley Road	B	Caversham / Emmer Green
61	Caversham Road	Vastern Road to Thames Avenue	A	Thames
62	Tilehurst Road	Liebenrood Rd to Parkside Road	C	Southcote / Battle
63	Caversham Road	Fire Station to Vastern Road	A	Thames
64	Kidmore Road	Richmond Road to Oakley Road	C	Caversham Heights
65	Westfield Road	Gosbrook Road to Henley Road	C	Caversham
66	Kidmore Road	Sandcroft Road to Borough Boundary	C	Caversham Heights
67	Henley Road	Chiltern Road to Grosvenor Road	A	Caversham
68	Rose Kiln Lane	Basingstoke Road to Gillette Way	C	Whitley / Katesgrove
69	Tilehurst Road	Connaught Road to Cranbury Road	C	Southcote / Battle

70	Bath Road	Southcote Lane to Berkeley Avenue	A	Coley/Southcote
71	Upper Woodcote Road	Richmond Road to St Peter's Avenue	A	Caversham Heights
72	Oxford Road	Russell Street to Eaton Place	C	Abbey
73	Overdown Road	Brooksby Road to Larkwood Close	C	Kentwood
74	Church Street	Full Extent	A	Caversham
75	Elgar Road South	Full Extent	U	Katesgrove
76	Imperial Way	Worton Drive to Basingstoke Road	C	Whitley

- **Bridges & Structures Schemes**

2026/27 CAPITAL BRIDGE PROGRAMME				
No	Scheme / Project	Cost Estimate	Cumulative Total	Notes
1	Kennetside Retaining Wall Strengthening - Phase 6 continuation	£ 750,000	£ 750,000	Section of Phase 6 requiring alternative strengthening solution
2	Bridge scheme to be confirmed from workbank	£295,000	£ 1045,000	Refer to Bridge Workbank below
3	Load Assessments & Structural Reviews	£ 20,000.00	£ 1,065,000	
4	General Management	£ 35,000.00	£1,100,000	

Bridges & Structures Workbank

1275	OXFORD ROAD
1291	BERKELEY AVENUE RAILWAY
1293	BERKELEY AVENUE CANAL
2243	GAS WORKS RETAINING WALL
2244	KENNET MOUTH RETAINING WALL
1277	CASTLE STREET NORTH
1278	CHATHAM STREET SOUTH
1279	CHATHAM STREET NORTH
1287	CASTLE STREET SOUTH
1292	CAVERSHAM ROAD CULVERT
1294	IDR-KENNET
2239	KENNETSIDE RETAINING WALL
2618	DENBEIGH PLACE CULVERT.
2537	HERON ISLAND
2628	GEORGE STREET CULVERT.

2629	KINGS MEADOW ROAD CULVERT.
2738	BROOK STREET WEST RETAINING WALL
2578	WHITLEY FOOTBRIDGE
2568	FOUDRY BROOK FOOTBRIDGE