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

Yes   91.3% (73 choices)

No   8.8% (7 choices)

This question is not clear / I prefer not to say   0% (0 choices)

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.**

English

**Do you agree or disagree that the proposed priorities above are important?**

	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.**

English

Please rate how well the Council currently delivers homelessness and rough sleeping services, against our proposed priorities:

80/80 - Matrix - required

	1 - Exceptional	2 - Satisfactory	3 - Neutral	4 - Unsatisfactory	5 - Unacceptable
Intervening early to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping	3.75%	18.75%	43.75%	26.25%	3.75%
Breaking the cycle of homelessness and rough sleeping	0%	20%	31.25%	41.25%	3.75%
Providing access to decent, suitable and sustainable homes	2.5%	17.5%	41.25%	30%	7.5%
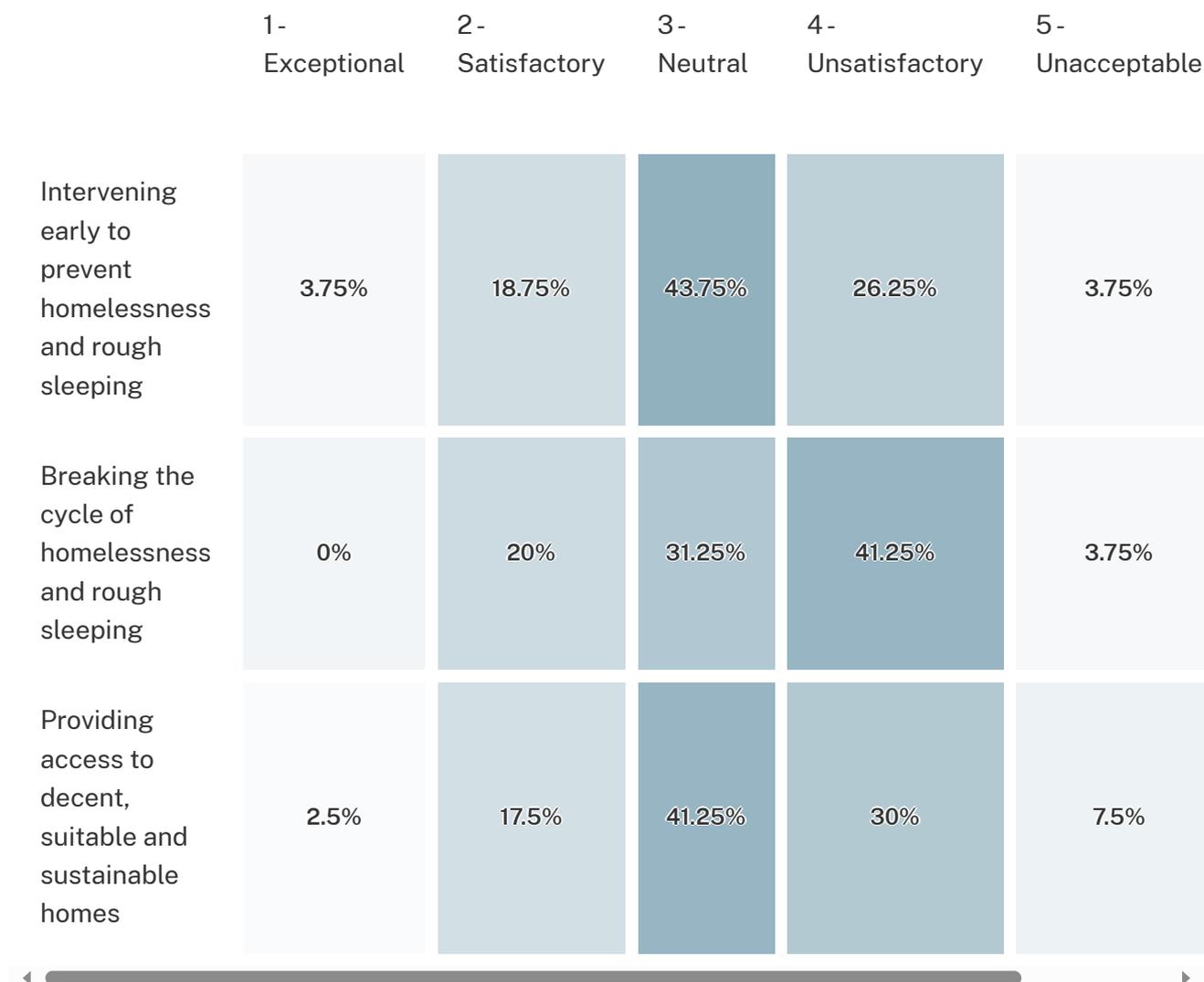
Feedback on the Council's current performance across the three strategic priorities was mixed. Around one in five respondents felt that service delivery was at least satisfactory, indicating **some confidence in existing efforts**. However, a significant proportion — 40% of respondents — provided neutral 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.

English

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 '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.
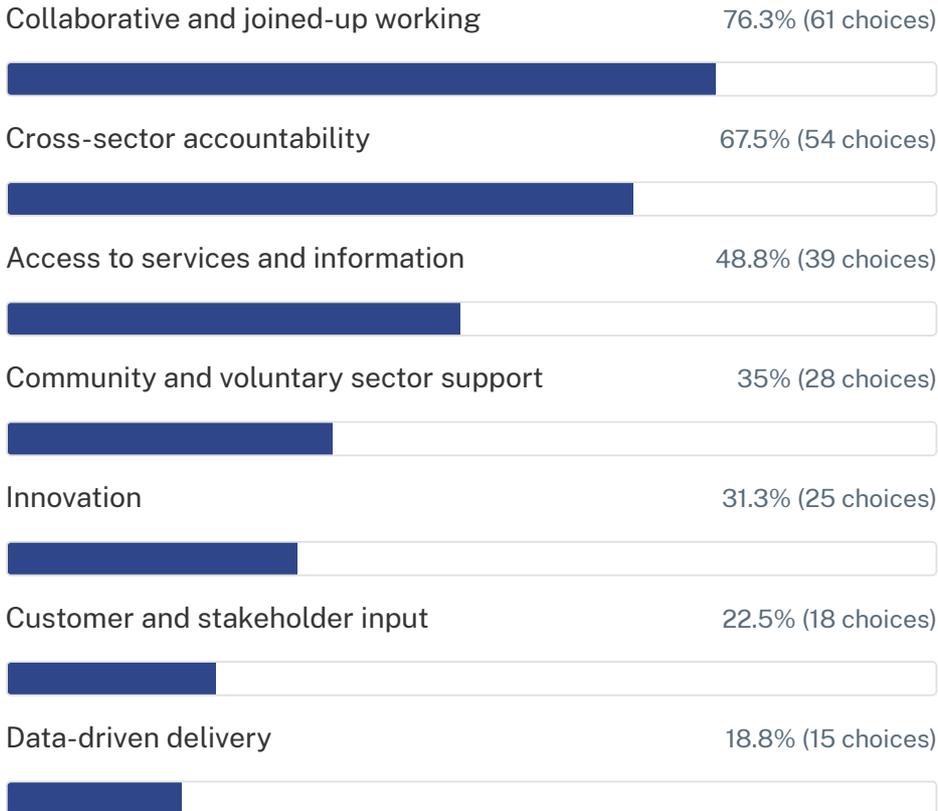
Respondents also pointed to systemic barriers, including **challenges related to benefits, immigration status, and eligibility for support** — especially for single individuals or those with limited access to public funds. Policy suggestions included rent caps, better alignment between housing benefit 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.

Collaborative and joined-up working — 76.3% (61 choices)

Cross-sector accountability — 67.5% (54 choices)

Access to services and information — 48.8% (39 choices)

Community and voluntary sector support — 35% (28 choices)

Innovation — 31.3% (25 choices)

Customer and stakeholder input — 22.5% (18 choices)

Data-driven delivery — 18.8% (15 choices)

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.

English

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**.
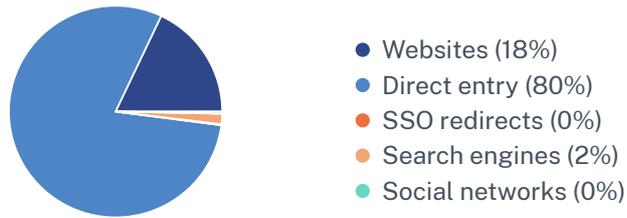
English

Are you responding as a:

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.

English

How people accessed the survey

- Websites (18%)
- Direct entry (80%)
- SSO redirects (0%)
- Search engines (2%)
- Social networks (0%)

What is your age?

| 25% | 19% | 17% | 15% | 10% | | | | |

- 45-54
- 65-74
- 55-64
- 35-44
- 25-34
- 75+
- 16-24
- Prefer not to say
- Unknown

What is your sex?

| 60% | 34% | | |

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say
- Unknown

Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

| 89% | | |

- Yes
- Prefer not to say
- No
- Unknown

What is your ethnic group?

| 76% | 11% | | | | |

- White
- Prefer not to say
- Black, Black British, Caribbean or African
- Asian or Asian British
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups
- Any other ethnic group
- Unknown

Do you have a disability?

| 76% | 13% | 10% | |

- No
- Yes
- Prefer not to say
- Unknown

English