

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:

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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

Single people and families living in Homelessness Support Services, emergency accommodation, temporary accommodation.	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.	Survey open 2 nd July - 10 th August 2025
General public, businesses, university students, internal staff and those affected by homelessness	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	Survey open 2 nd July - 10 th August 2025
Statutory, charity and community led services who are supporting or providing a service to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness	Cross-sector focus groups with informed and experienced partners	Six online focus groups held between 9 th July and 7 th August.

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 disproportionality 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.Huteson



Recoverable Signature

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Lead Officer
Signed by: Verena.Huteson