

Homelessness Strategy

2026 — 2028



St Albans
City & District Council



Introduction

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to take strategic responsibility for tackling and preventing homelessness. St Albans City and District Council's Homelessness Strategy sets out a three year plan to prevent homelessness, provide immediate support, and deliver sustainable housing solutions.

Building on the 2022 – 2025 strategy, it aligns with national legislation such as the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the National Plan to End Homelessness. It was developed in partnership with statutory bodies, voluntary organisations, and people with lived experience. The Council will lead delivery through collaboration with local providers and the Homelessness Forum, ensuring the strategy remains dynamic, monitored, and responsive to emerging needs.

Vision

We recognise that homelessness disproportionately affects ethnic minority groups, vulnerable persons, and individuals with complex needs. In December 2025, the Council passed a motion emphasising to the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) that the quality, availability, and stability of housing has a direct impact on residents' health.

We want to make sure everyone who comes to the Council for help with homelessness gets the right support and real solutions. This strategy sets out how we will work with local partners and organisations to make this happen.

We looked at what worked well in the last three years and what needs to improve. We also asked for ideas from the Homelessness Forum, our staff, and people who have used our services. Their feedback helped us decide what matters most.

We have developed five main priorities. For each priority, we explain the actions we and our partners will take to make a real difference.

Priority 1: Adopt early, rapid, and effective intervention to prevent homelessness.

Priority 2: Achieving the lowest possible levels of rough sleeping through targeted measures, with a continued commitment to ending it over time.

Priority 3: Ensuring a customer-centred approach.

Priority 4: Increasing the supply of, and access to, stable and affordable accommodation.

Priority 5: Supporting households into safe and secure accommodation.

Local Context

St Albans is an attractive place to live. It is a commuter hotspot, has excellent schools, access to countryside and green parks and historical charm. This means that St Albans is among the most expensive places to live outside London. St Albans has the highest average house price across the East of England region, and is the most expensive city to rent outside of London, in the whole of the UK.

This results in a high demand for affordable housing and means that not everyone is able to access suitable accommodation in the district. This impacts on the housing solutions that the Council can offer applicants who approach the Council for advice and support.

The Council Plan has identified four corporate priorities:

- Support great communities.
- Improve social housing provision.
- Make the environment a priority in all our decisions.
- Treat everyone with fairness.

Developing a new Homelessness Strategy is referenced in the Council Plan 2025 - 2030 as part of its commitment to ensure additional housing for Social Rent is provided, whether through direct investment or through the planning approval process.

This strategy will build on the successes from the previous Homelessness Strategy 2022 - 2025. It will also seek to understand and learn from situations where positive outcomes were not achieved, or expectations met.

Successes from the last strategy include:

- The role of Specialist Homelessness Assessment Advisor is now fully funded and been made a permanent role providing outreach support to rough

sleepers in the district.

- Delivering an every night Winter Beds service working in partnership with the Winter Beds Project to support provision of accommodation as part of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) service.
- Continuation of funding for the St Albans Community Bank and Citizens Advice in delivering services which prevent homelessness such as low interest loans and provision of specialist independent advice.
- Redevelopment of Martin House completed to provide modern supported accommodation in a central location and a Hub Coordinator appointed to lead on providing advice and support and liaising with other agencies.
- Working together with the local Refuge service to ensure that the various teams are communicating to ensure signs of abuse are spotted at an early stage and bespoke advice can be provided.
- Regular drop-in housing surgeries with rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping.
- Home visits carried out to all parental family evictions to provide personalised advice and assistance.
- Staff support the family through the homeless process with realistic advice and assistance.



In addition, the Homelessness Forum, has been in place for the duration of the strategy. Quarterly meetings are in place with partners to share ideas, discuss prevalent homeless issues and develop networks that will help shape the service the Council delivers to its customers. This will continue for the lifetime of this strategy.

However, there have been ongoing challenges in the past 3 years as the Council has strived to deliver a consistent level of advice and support to households at a time when there is an increased demand on our services.

- It has not been possible to ensure nobody sleeps rough in the district despite the Outreach services available. The Council continue to work to identify a pathway of options to support those entrenched rough sleepers into more suitable accommodation through identifying the root cause of their homelessness.
- The cost of private rental housing remains high in the district with most rent levels above the Local Housing Allowance which means accessing the private rental sector in the district remains challenging.

- The Single Homeless Pathway has identified barriers in the process that can only be addressed through working in partnership.
- The Council secured government funding to deliver a ‘Housing First’ project but this remains a challenging project due to the complex needs of applicants. Although it has celebrated some significant softer outcomes such as individuals accessing support groups to help them integrate into the community.

The primary reasons for homelessness approaches in the district remain broadly the same since the last Homelessness Strategy. In 2024 - 25 there were 1110 approaches for homeless assistance. This compares to 798 approaches for homeless assistance and advice in 2020 - 21 and reflects the increase in demand in our services. As well as an increase in footfall, the complexity of cases and applicants with multiple support needs has increased over this period.



Despite the increase in demand the top three reasons for applicants approaching the Council for assistance remain the same:

	2022 - 23	2023 - 24	2024 - 25
Family evictions	184	219	198
Fleeing Domestic Abuse	133	154	142
Private Rental eviction (Section 21 Notice)	87	120	95

The average number of households in Temporary Accommodation in the past three years are:

2022 - 23	2023 - 24	2024 - 25
112	146	184

The number of households in temporary accommodation continued to increase, peaking at 237 households in September 2025. This increase reflects the challenges the team have had in the past three years managing demand on the service and being able to offer alternative housing options.

The Council does receive government funding to help deliver its homelessness services. The funding allocation since the last Homelessness Strategy are:

2022 - 23	2023 - 24	2024 - 25
£661,048	£986,138	£1,028,135

The increase in demand for temporary accommodation has led to a substantial increase in the number of placements made in hotels. Not only are extended hotel stays unsuitable for families, but they also have a significant impact on the Council’s budget. The hotel spend in the past three years is:

2022 - 23	2023 - 24	2024 - 25
£140,467	£391,059	£1,103,240

The increased spend on hotel accommodation in the past three years impacts on the services the Council can deliver with any additional costs having to be subsidised by the Council.

In September 2025 specialist advisors from the MHCLG visited St Albans to review our homeless services and identified a series of recommendations. These recommendations have helped shape and inform the priorities included within this strategy.

In December 2025, the Council were informed of the outcome of the Local Government Finance Settlement. The provision allocations for the next three years are:

2026 - 27	2027 - 28	2028 - 29
£1,051,358	£1,087,476	£1,119,070

This represents an increase in funding and a move away from a system where homelessness and rough sleeping services are operating separately and towards prioritising prevention and providing holistic support to people based on assessment of their needs. By funding proven interventions, such as tenancy sustainment and rent support, we reduce the long-term financial pressures on public services while improving stability and wellbeing for applicants presenting as homeless or seeking housing advice.

As a result of the Fair Funding Review, Temporary Accommodation funding has been separated out from the Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant to end tensions that has forced local authorities to choose between investment in prevention and meeting temporary accommodation costs. The temporary accommodation element of the homelessness grant has been



consolidated in the non-ringfenced Revenue Support Grant whilst the prevent grant remains ring-fenced to prevention services.

Certainty over funding for the next three years will allow the Council the best opportunity to deliver on the objectives included within the strategy. The Council is committed to a spend to save approach that invests early in effective homelessness prevention and rapid response support.

Adopting a spend to save approach ensures that decisions made throughout the lifetime of this strategy will be based on long-term social and economic impact, not short-term cost. We will monitor outcomes, evaluate value for money, and work with partners to embed spend-to-save principles across all homelessness services.



National Context

Homelessness remains a significant challenge across the UK, driven by a combination of rising housing costs, shortages of affordable homes, cost of living crisis and pressures on local authority budgets. In England alone, 330,410 households sought help from councils in 2024 – 25, including over 107,000 families with children.

The number of households in temporary accommodation reached record highs, with more than 117,000 in England and similar upward trends in Scotland and Wales. Rough sleeping also increased, despite the success of previous targeted interventions such as the Everyone In initiative during the pandemic.

In December 2025 the government unveiled its National Plan to End Homelessness, The Plan has been informed by people with lived experience, frontline workers and the sector and sets out the long-term vision to end homelessness and rough sleeping.

The strategy includes an Action Plan with:

- Immediate action on temporary accommodation, particularly B&B use.

- Medium-term change to shift away from crisis and put prevention at the heart of public services.
- Long-term sustainable change to address the root causes of homelessness.

The Plan is backed up with £3.5billion investment with some targeted funding to address rough sleeping, focussed particularly on those who have slept on the streets the longest. This includes:

- The launch of a £124million supported housing programme to prevent homelessness and to help people off the streets and into more stable housing.
- The launch of a £15million programme to tackle long-term rough sleeping, working with targeted areas to test innovative approaches and spread learning.
- Providing £37million for the Ending Homelessness in Communities Fund, working with the voluntary, community and faith sectors to improve support given to people experiencing long-term rough sleeping.



Through these measures, the Government is setting new national targets to halve long-term rough sleeping and to eliminate the use of B&B's for families other than for very short-term use in emergencies by the end of this parliament.

In addition, the Local Authority Housing Fund is a four year £950million programme primarily aimed at ending the use of B&B and poor-quality temporary accommodation for families who find themselves homeless and in need of accommodation.

Throughout the lifetime of this strategy the Council will be able to measure the impact of the Renters Rights Act. The Act which became law in October 2025 will be implemented in May 2026 and has a range of protections for households in the private rental sector. These include banning no-fault evictions and ending fixed-term tenancies for indefinite periodic ones.

These national priorities are very much reflected in the priorities the Council has identified within this strategy. These priorities are aimed to build on the foundations of the measures put in place for the service to continue to adapt and thrive in a challenging environment.

Local Government Reorganisation is coming to St Albans in 2028. These changes include more local control and new ways of funding services. They will have a significant impact on how we plan for homelessness. New Mayoral Strategic Authorities and combined funding streams (called Integrated Settlements) will give regions more flexibility and responsibility to tackle housing and homelessness. This approach focuses on local needs and helps councils link homelessness prevention with other priorities like health, social care, and jobs.

At the time of writing this strategy, no decision has been made on the future make up of any unitary authorities in Hertfordshire. However, this will not impact on the work the Council will deliver over the lifetime of this strategy to relieve and prevent homelessness and work to achieve the strategic priorities.

Strategic Priorities

Priority 1 Adopt early, rapid, and effective intervention to prevent homelessness

Objective	Proposed actions	Lead services / partners	Key performance indicators (KPIs)
Early identification of households at risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce proactive screening at all customer contact points Use data-sharing protocols to flag risk indicators Recognise the early signs of households threatened with homelessness and create a more proactive response 	Lead: SADC Housing Options Partners: Tenancy Management, Customer Services, Revenues & Benefits, Adult Social Care, Children's Services Voluntary Sector, Citizens Advice, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of referrals received at prevention stage Average days from first contact to triage
Deliver rapid and tailored prevention support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Prevention Toolkit (arrears support, mediation, landlord engagement) Establish a rapid response process for those cases that require more immediate action 	Lead: SADC Housing Options Partners: Private Rental Sector (PRS) team, Registered Providers, Citizens Advice, Mediation Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of cases successfully prevented Average time from referral to intervention
Strengthen multi-agency collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formalise what information the Council will require to support the duty to refer process Provide joint training on early warning signs and trauma-informed practice 	Lead: SADC Housing Options Partners: NHS Trusts, Probation, HCC, Voluntary Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duty-to-Refer compliance rate Number of staff trained across agencies to ensure that the correct information is shared allowing staff to make an informed decision on a case



Priority 2 Achieving the lowest possible levels of rough sleeping through targeted measures, with a continued commitment to ending it over time.

Objective	Proposed actions	Lead services / partners	Key performance indicators (KPIs)
Identify and support move on from rough sleeping through early assertive intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify individuals at risk via outreach and Streetlink communications Provide targeted prevention support (rent arrears help, mediation, rapid rehousing) 	Lead: SADC Housing Options Partners: Adult Social Care, Probation, Voluntary Sector, Registered Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of cases moved on from rough sleeping and / or returning to rough sleeping Reduction in new rough sleeping cases Number of rough sleepers on annual count
Provide rapid response and accommodation offers for those sleeping rough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operate a 'No Second Night Out' approach Expand emergency accommodation and winter provision Deploy outreach teams for immediate engagement 	Lead: SADC Housing Options Partners: Outreach services, Voluntary Sector, NHS Trusts, Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average time from identification to accommodation offers Number of individuals provided with an alternative offer of accommodation within 24 – 48 hours
Support recovery and long-term solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop pathways to settled housing with wraparound support Increase access to alternative housing options through the single homeless pathway meeting and the Complex Needs MDT Integrate mental health and substance misuse services 	Lead: SADC Housing Options Partners: HCC, Substance Misuse Teams, Registered Providers, Voluntary Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of former rough sleepers sustaining accommodation at 6 and 12 months Number of placements and alternative accommodation sourced through the Single Homeless Pathway

Priority 3 Ensuring a customer-centred approach

Objective	Proposed actions	Lead services / partners	Key performance indicators (KPIs)
Improve communication accessibility and establish customers with a variety of routes of access into the service ease of use for customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide clear, easy-to-read information on homelessness services Offer multiple contact channels (phone, online, in-person) Ensure translation and interpretation services are available 	Lead: SADC Housing Options Partners: Customer Services, Communications Team, Voluntary Sector, HCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer satisfaction scores % of customers reporting information was easy to understand Average response time to enquiries
Embed customer feedback insights into real-time service design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce regular feedback surveys and lived experience panels Use feedback to inform policy and service To embed continuous improvement based on feedback into opportunities that are a true reflection of customer need 	Lead: SADC Housing Options Partners: Customer Services, Voluntary Sector, Lived Experience Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of feedback responses collected % of service changes influenced by customer feedback Annual improvement in satisfaction ratings
Deliver person-centred informed support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train staff in trauma-informed and person-centred practice Develop tailored housing plans and shared decision making for individuals and families Ensure support and advice reflects cultural and individual needs 	Lead: SADC Housing Options Partners: Adult Social Care, Health Services, Voluntary Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of staff trained in trauma-informed practice % of customers with Personalised Housing Plans (PHPs) Reduction in repeat homelessness cases

Priority 4 Increasing the supply of, and access to, stable and affordable accommodation

Objective	Proposed actions	Lead services / partners	Key performance indicators (KPIs)
Expand the availability of affordable homes maximising those at Social Rent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Registered Providers to deliver new affordable homes (including Social Rent and Affordable Rent) Maximise Section 106 contributions and Homes England funding Explore modular / modern methods of construction to accelerate delivery 	Lead: SADC Housing Strategy Partners: Registered Providers, Developers, Planning, Homes England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on the number of new affordable homes completed on an annual basis of all tenures % of new developments achieving policy-compliant affordable housing % of completions at Social Rent
Improve access to the Private Rented Sector (PRS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish / enhance a Social Lettings / PRS Access Scheme offering landlord incentives (guaranteed rent, void cover, light-touch repairs, single point of contact) Expand rent deposit, rent in advance, and tenancy bond offers; set up a PRS Access Fund for affordability gaps Landlord engagement: quarterly forums, pre- eviction problem-solving panels, and fast-track support for arrears / repairs to prevent tenancy loss 	Lead: SADC Private Rented Sector team and Housing Options Partners: Landlord Forum, Lettings Agents, Revenues & Benefits, Registered Providers (for move-on), Voluntary Sector, Citizens Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of households rehoused through PRS schemes % PRS tenancies sustained at 6 and 12 months Number of landlords participating in access / incentive schemes Reduction in homelessness presentations from PRS

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote longer fixed terms and fair tenancy practices including targeted work with local agents Improve renter confidence: clear tenant readiness training, budgeting and rights information 		
Provide long-term stability and sustainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scale up supported housing pathways with wraparound support (Mental Health, substance misuse, employment) Fund tenancy sustainment (floating support, budgeting, digital inclusion, furniture / white goods) to reduce churn Strengthen move-on pathways from Temporary Accommodation / Refuge services / hostels Align allocations and local lettings policies to prioritise households at risk and enable settled, affordable options 	Lead: SADC Housing Options and Housing Strategy Partners: Mental Health services, Adult Social Care, Substance Misuse Providers, Registered Providers, Voluntary Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % households sustaining accommodation ≥12 months Number of supported housing placements and supported units available Reduction in repeat homelessness Average duration in TA before settled move-on

Priority 5 Supporting households into safe and secure accommodation

Objective	Proposed actions	Lead services / partners	Key performance indicators (KPIs)
Ensure rapid access to safe, suitable accommodation at the point of need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain emergency options including Domestic Abuse (DA) refuges, crash-pads, and winter provision Implement risk assessments for safeguarding, DA, and complex needs to match placements appropriately 	Lead: SADC Housing Options Partners: DA Services, Outreach services, Voluntary Sector, Police, Registered Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average time from identification to safe placement % of DA victims offered suitable, secure accommodation within 24 – 48 hours Placement suitability compliance
Create clear pathways from emergency accommodation into settled housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Rapid Rehousing routes including DA move-on schemes Use rent deposit and bond schemes to support DA survivors into PRS Coordinate multi-agency panels to unblock barriers (ID, arrears, safety measures) 	Lead: SADC Housing Options Partners: DA Services, SADC Private Rental Sector team, Landlord Forum, Registered Providers, Revenues & Benefits, Voluntary Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of households (including DA survivors) moving from emergency and / or refuge to more settled accommodation within target period Number of DA survivors rehoused in the PRS Reduction in average TA duration
Sustain placements safely and prevent returns to homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide wraparound support including DA safety planning and sanctuary schemes Strengthen tenancy sustainment with early arrears interventions and fast-track repairs Support households with multiple / complex needs including DA survivors to remain in the household where necessary 	Lead: SADC Housing Options Commissioning / Strategy Partners: DA Services, Adult Social Care, Substance Misuse providers, Registered Providers, HCC, Voluntary Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of households sustaining accommodation at 6 and 12 months Reduction in repeat homelessness and DA-related homelessness Customer-reported safety and satisfaction scores

Conclusion

It is considered that this strategy demonstrates the Council's objectives of preventing, relieving, and reducing homelessness and rough sleeping in the district by delivering services that are tailored for the needs of the individual.

Trends in homelessness approaches will be monitored and inform any changes in the action plan to deliver the aims and objectives of the Council's priorities. Any legislative changes will also be taken into consideration. This includes the publication of the government's Homelessness Strategy.

The Council will take ownership of monitoring the progress of the aims and measures within the strategy and will be monitored on a quarterly basis by the Homelessness Forum.

It is intended this strategy will be agile and organic, adapting to respond to local issues and identifying best practice both locally and nationally. We will also carry out quarterly analysis of data and applicant feedback to develop service improvements and monitor levels of homelessness. This will be used to enhance our commitment to meeting the key priorities outlined above.

An annual review of the strategy's priorities will be carried out, reported to the Housing and Inclusion Committee, and published on the Council's website.

The Council are grateful to all its partners who attend the Homelessness Forum and have helped shape this strategy and will work with us to deliver the priorities:

- Centre 33
- Change, Grow, Live (CGL)
- Citizens Advice
- Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)
- De Paul Charity
- Druglink
- Emerging Futures
- Emmaus
- Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)
- Hertfordshire Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders (HACRO)
- Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust
- Herts Young Homeless
- Hightown Housing Association
- Homeless Link
- HM Prison and Probations Service
- Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)
- MIND
- Open Door Night Shelter
- Peabody Housing Association
- SAHWR
- St Albans Community Bank
- St Albans Food Bank
- St Albans Cathedral
- The Marlborough Science Academy
- Turning Point
- Verso



Accessibility

The Council wants everyone to have equal access to its services. The document is available in a digital format that works with screen readers. We can also provide it in large print, Braille, Easy Read, in a different language or audio if you ask. We want to make sure everyone, including people with disabilities or communication needs, can use and understand it.

No one will be treated unfairly because of their gender, gender identity, marital or civil partnership status, race, background, religion or beliefs, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or age.

About the Homelessness Strategy

We check carefully to make sure the service is fair, and that people see it as fair. The strategy is written in clear, simple language with easy-to-follow headings and structure so everyone can understand it.

Contact us

If you need adjustments or a different format:



Email us at equalities@stalbans.gov.uk



Call us on 01727 819340



Write to: The Housing Department, St Albans District Council, St Peter's Street, St Albans AL1 3JE