



Press Release

10 July 2024

Residents' views sought on council's homelessness strategy

Fenland District Council is developing a new five-year Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy – and would like to hear your views.

The comprehensive document, that all councils have and must regularly review, sets out how the council and its partners will continue to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping in the district through to 2029.

The document builds on the ongoing efforts and commitment to preventing homelessness and aim to end rough sleeping for good, despite the significant nationwide challenges.

In Fenland, like many areas in the country, demand for the council's homelessness service has increased since 2018. The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the pandemic, welfare reforms, a national shortage of housing supply and the ongoing cost of living crisis has left more households than ever vulnerable to homelessness.

In 2018/19, the council received 1,856 requests for support, compared to 2093 in 2022/23, an increase of 12.77%. Since 2020, there has also been a 20% increase in requests from family households with children.

More people with complex needs are also reaching out to the council for support, resulting in the need for more homes with specialist provision, such as alcohol and drug and mental health support.

Locally, the main cause of homelessness is family and friends no longer being able to house someone, followed by a relationship ending, with end of private rented tenancy agreement being the third highest cause. The fourth highest cause is domestic violence.

Despite the challenges, in the 12 months to March 2024, the council successfully prevented 257 households from becoming homeless.

It has also reduced the use of emergency bed and breakfast facilities and hotels by successfully securing funding to deliver better short-term accommodation and supported homes.

Cllr Sam Hoy, the Council's Portfolio Holder for Housing, said: "Whilst we have made significant headway to reaching our goal of zero rough sleepers in Fenland, we face significant challenges in homelessness moving forward, with the cost of living crisis and those rough sleepers without recourse to public funds or those who are not yet ready to engage.

"Despite the challenges, our draft strategy is one of ambition and creativity. We hope it will build on the innovations already delivered by the council, strong partnership working and a service which is already delivering good outcomes for many people."

Fenland District Council has now launched a ten-week consultation on its draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy and Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan, running from Monday 8 July to Sunday 15 September.

The core aims and commitments in the strategy are:

- To use our housing powers to prevent homelessness, reduce rough sleeping, meet housing needs, improve housing conditions and keep homes safe and accessible, in line with the council's corporate business plan.
- To prevent homelessness wherever possible, involving teams being creative, and flexible, and working with partners to achieve this.
- To reduce/stop the cycle of homelessness and sustaining futures by finding suitable pathways for clients and increasing the number of supported placements within Fenland.
- Continue to work collaboratively with ambitious and experienced partners who are an integral part of the council's ambition to eliminating rough sleeping and homelessness in Fenland.

Residents can view the draft strategy and action plan, and take part in the online consultation survey via the council's website at: www.fenland.gov.uk/consultations

Paper copies of the draft strategy and action plan are also available to view at the council's customer service centres at Fenland Hall, March, and the Boathouse Business Centre, Wisbech, and at local libraries.

Anyone who would like the survey in another format or would like to respond in a different way can email housingadvice@fenland.gov.uk or phone 01354 654321.

Anyone who feels they are at risk of becoming homeless should contact the council as soon as possible for support. Visit: www.fenland.gov.uk/homelessness or phone 01354 654321.

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Notes to Editors

For media enquiries, please contact the Fenland District Council press office on 01354 622226 or email: communications@fenland.gov.uk