HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2026-2031

This Action Plan focuses on new and enhanced actions that will strengthen Colchester's response to homelessness, rather than duplicating day-to-day business-as-usual activity that is already embedded within core services. It is intended to complement existing delivery by identifying where additional focus, development or coordination is required to improve outcomes.

The Plan has been designed to be action-orientated and as specific as possible, setting out clear areas of activity that can be progressed, monitored and reviewed. Where objectives themselves represent ongoing delivery commitments, these are identified as such, and no further actions are listed beneath them to avoid unnecessary duplication.

The final page of this Action Plan sets out the targets required by the **Government's Local Outcomes Framework**, while the actions within the Plan detail how these targets will be achieved.

Overall, the Action Plan provides a practical and focused framework to support delivery of the Strategy, strengthen partnership working, and drive meaningful change for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Colchester's **Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Placement Policy** can be found **here**.

Colchester is not required to produce a **Bed and Breakfast Elimination Plan**, as no households with dependent children have exceeded the six-week statutory limit for Bed and Breakfast accommodation at any point during 2026/27 to date.

Effective **governance** is essential to delivering the objectives and actions of this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. Overall accountability sits with the Council, with progress overseen through established corporate governance arrangements and regular performance monitoring. An annual review of progress against the Strategy's Action Plan will be undertaken by a **Homelessness Partnership Board** (further details of which are included within the Actions set out below).

AIM:
Break the cycle of homelessness through targeted prevention & early intervention

OBJECTIVE:
Invest in early, proactive intervention where households are at risk of losing their home, including **mediation in family breakdown, landlord negotiation, legal support and targeted rent arrears schemes.**

Cohort	Action	Timeframe	Partners
CCC Tenants	Pilot scheme "Project Logic" implemented to create healthier living environments (where housing quality plays a central role in supporting respiratory health) and to foster stronger relationships with the local authority as a responsive and proactive landlord. This initiative will embed collaboration, integration and partnership working, including residents through co-production, to create lasting improvements in both housing and health outcomes and allowing CBH to identify and support residents who may also be at risk of homelessness.	2026-27	CBH Operations NEE Alliance
All Residents	Commission an external partner to review all homelessness prevention, housing options and temporary accommodation services delivered by the Council in partnership with CBH. The review will assess the effectiveness, efficiency and financial sustainability of current arrangements, identifying opportunities to innovate and strengthen prevention activity, improve resident outcomes, reduce temporary accommodation pressures and support long-term service sustainability.	2026	CCC Housing Board CBH
Young People (16-25)	The Homelessness Partnership Board will seek to identify and obtain funding sources that could allow the recommencement of family mediation sessions (which are recognised as beneficial as parental eviction remains one of the main reasons for youth homelessness) with a dedicated Mediator at the Youth Enquiry Services (Y.E.S).	2026-27	CCC Housing Strategy Team CBH Housing Solutions Team ECC Social Care Teams Youth Enquiry Services YMCA

	In the interim, providers continue to offer basic strategies and signposting to support families to resolve conflict and Y.E.S continue to contact parents/carers (where appropriate) to try and prevent homelessness for young people.		

OBJECTIVE: **Develop tailored prevention pathways** for groups known to be at higher risk, including young people, people with support needs, rough sleepers moving into accommodation and people experiencing domestic abuse.			
Cohort	**Action**	**Timeframe**	**Partners**
Young People (16-23)	Support the ongoing delivery of the Essex NEST (Nacro Education Support and Transition) programme, commissioned in 2022 to reduce the risk of homelessness and support independent living, by engaging as required in service delivery, review and evaluation, and contributing to recommissioning activity planned for 2027 and 2029.	2026-27/29	NACRO ECC Peabody CCC Housing Strategy Team
Young People (16-25) CBH Tenants Supported Housing Tenants	Develop further early intervention initiatives including pre-eviction panels, pre tenancy and tenancy sustainment workshops. This includes a continuation and expansion of the Your Own Place workshops.	2026-31	CBH Housing Management Supported Housing Providers Youth Enquiry Services
Rough Sleepers	Deliver differentiated homelessness pathways based on level of risk, providing intensive, flexible and housing-led support for entrenched rough sleepers, and rapid early intervention for people newly at risk of rough sleeping to prevent entrenchment.	2026-31	CBH Outreach workers Beacon House Open Road Phoenix Futures
Domestic Abuse Sufferers	Strengthen the housing led response to domestic abuse by delivering the Sanctuary Scheme, providing dedicated Domestic Abuse Project Worker support alongside tenancy sustainment teams, working with Essex Police and MARAC partners, and supporting victims to remain safely in their homes or access refuge, temporary accommodation or move on options as needed.	2026-31	CBH Housing Management Team
CCC Tenants (particularly those affected by mental ill-health and/or	Expand awareness of Alternative Payment Arrangements (APAs) and create clearer pathways to access them. APAs are set up via the DWP to pay the housing cost element of Universal Credit directly to landlords on a temporary basis. They exist to prevent	2026-31	DWP CBH Housing Management Supported Housing Providers

addiction issues), Supported Housing Tenants	rent arrears, eviction and homelessness where a claimant cannot manage a single monthly payment.		

OBJECTIVE: Ensure **anyone at imminent risk of rough sleeping receives rapid, person-centred support**, including immediate accommodation options.			
Cohort	**Action**	**Timeframe**	**Partners**
Young People (16-25)	Continue and strengthen close partnership working between the Outreach workers, Y.E.S and supported housing providers to identify risk early and prevent escalation into street homelessness.	2026-31	CBH Outreach workers Youth Enquiry Services Supported Housing Providers
Rough Sleepers or those at imminent risk of rough sleeping	Identify ways to continue to deliver Colchester's Rough Sleeper Accommodation Pathway as a staged, housing-led approach that prevents rough sleeping wherever possible, enables rapid access to accommodation for people on the streets, and supports progression through supported, housing-led and move-on housing into stable, independent living with ongoing prevention support at every stage.	2026-31	CBH Outreach workers Supported Housing Providers

OBJECTIVE: **Embed prevention duties across public services** in line with national plans for a new "duty to collaborate" and preventing discharge from hospitals, prisons and other institutions into homelessness.			
Cohort	**Action**	**Timeframe**	**Partners**
Prison Leavers	Ensure compliance with the Essex Prison Release Housing Protocol, a partnership between local authorities, the probation service, and HMP Chelmsford designed to prevent homelessness upon release, particularly focusing on securing accommodation at least 56 days before release. It aims to reduce reoffending by securing stable housing and avoiding rough sleeping.	2026-31	CBH Housing Solutions Team The Probation Service Essex County Council
Hospital Leavers	Strengthen implementation of the Essex Homelessness Hospital Discharge Protocol through joint working with health,	2026-31	CBH Housing Solutions Team Essex County Council NHS

	housing and social care partners to support safe and planned discharges. Explore expansion of the Stepping Stones project which supports those unable to return to their homes immediately post leaving hospital (for example where adaptation is required) by providing short term supported accommodation.		Community 360
Care Leavers	Embed and implement the Essex Care Leaver Housing Pathway Protocol through joint working with Children's Services and housing partners to prevent homelessness and improve planned move-on for care leavers aged 18–25.	2026-31	CBH Housing Solutions Team Essex County Council Supported Housing Partners

AIM:
Support people to maintain their accommodation

OBJECTIVE: **Expand tenancy sustainment services**, ensuring households placed into new homes, whether in private rented, social/affordable or supported housing, receive support to settle, manage rent, access healthcare and employment and avoid repeat homelessness.			
Cohort	**Action**	**Timeframe**	**Partners**
All Residents at Risk of Homelessness (particularly those with complex needs/a history of homelessness)	Support the expansion of the Housing and Tenancy Support Service (HoSTS), delivered by Phoenix Futures in partnership with Colchester Borough Homes, to provide early, intensive and personalised support for individuals at risk of homelessness, helping sustain existing tenancies and support people in temporary accommodation to move into and maintain permanent housing, particularly those with complex needs.	2026-27	Phoenix Futures CBH ECC
Young People (16-25)	Develop a volunteer-led life-skills programme, including budgeting and practical independent-living skills, to strengthen resilience, improve financial capability and reduce the risk of homelessness among young people accessing the service.	2026-27	Youth Enquiry Services

OBJECTIVE: **Expand public awareness and accessibility** of housing advice, ensuring residents know how to access help at the earliest stage.			
Cohort	**Action**	**Timeframe**	**Partners**
All Residents	Expand and develop the Frontline website to include comprehensive, up-to-date information on homelessness and housing services, ensuring clear, accurate signposting so residents can easily access advice, support and referral routes at the earliest opportunity.	2026-27	CCC Communities Team CCC Housing Strategy Team
All Residents	Provide targeted training for Social Prescribers (link workers supporting residents through GP practices and community health services) to enable effective housing and homelessness advice	2026-28	NHS Social Prescribers

	and signposting, strengthening early intervention and prevention through health-based referral pathways.		

OBJECTIVE: **Increase the availability of financial inclusion support**, including debt advice, budget training, benefit maximisation, cost-of-living support and crisis payments, to reduce poverty-related homelessness.			
Cohort	**Action**	**Timeframe**	**Partners**
All Residents	Integrate the CBH Financial Inclusion Team and the CCC Team to create a single, coordinated service, exploring enhanced early-intervention and crisis prevention approaches. The service will offer improved access to debt, income including benefit maximisation and crisis support, including distribution of the Crisis and Resilience Fund, supporting low-income residents in immediate financial crises with tailored support.	2026-27	CCC Communities Team CBH Financial Inclusion Team DWP
Young People Rough Sleepers CCC Tenants	Continue and further develop accessible budgeting and money-management training for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including rough sleepers, young people and social housing tenants, to build financial resilience, support tenancy sustainment and reduce the risk of repeat homelessness.	2026-2031	Beacon House Youth Enquiry Services CBH

OBJECTIVE: **Enhance support for private renters**, in line with national commitments to abolish Section 21 'no fault' evictions through the Renters' Rights Bill and empower tenants to challenge unfair rent increases.			
Cohort	**Action**	**Timeframe**	**Partners**
Private Tenants	Deliver a coordinated, council-wide programme to ensure full operational readiness for the Renters' Rights Reform from 1 May 2026, including updated enforcement policies, staff training, data-sharing arrangements and clear public guidance, with Private Sector Housing leading on statutory enforcement and compliance.	2026-27	CCC Private Sector Housing Team CBH
All Tenants	Update homelessness prevention, housing advice and temporary accommodation pathways to reflect the abolition of Section 21	2026-27	CBH

	and the move to Section 8-only possession, strengthening early intervention, cross-team working and demand management to respond to increased private rented sector instability and homelessness risk.		

OBJECTIVE: **Map the supply, quality and demand of Supported Housing** in Colchester, in line with the new Supported Housing Act requirements, and identify ways to improve access for people that are homeless and require support.			
Cohort	**Action**	**Timeframe**	**Partners**
All users/potential users of Supported Housing	Continue participation in the Essex Supported Housing Partnership Board, a countywide multi-agency forum that brings together local authorities, health, social care and housing providers to coordinate the planning, commissioning and development of supported and specialist housing.	2026-31	ECC and all Tier 2 Authorities Health Partners
All cohorts using Supported Housing	Review demand and supply of Supported Housing in Colchester and produce a Strategy in line with the recommendations of the Supported Housing (regulation) Act 2025, in partnership with Braintree, Tendring and Essex County Council as well as other Partners (including the Joint Referral Panel).	April 2027	CCC Housing Strategy Team Housing Strategy leads in Braintree, Tendring and Essex County Council Joint Referral Panel

AIM:
Improve partnership working to deliver a more coordinated, person-centred response to homelessness

OBJECTIVE:

Expand multi-agency case management to provide wraparound support for people with multiple or complex needs (including mental health or substance misuse needs), making it easier to identify what/if support is being provided and by whom.

Cohort	Action	Timeframe	Partners
All Residents	Implementation of Neighbourhood Health by NHS Essex, in partnership with CCC/the local authority. Neighbourhood Health integrates services around people's lives, improves outcomes by focusing on prevention rather than crisis management and devolves power to local areas, which understand local needs.	2026-31	Neighbourhood Place Team – North East and West CCC
Young People (Pre-Birth to 19) Pregnant Women	Expand information sharing between CBH and the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Services (ECFWS) so that ECFWS are notified of all families with children under 19 years of age and/or pregnant women are transferring into Temporary Accommodation. CBH also to notify where there are children with new or increasing vulnerabilities and where there is a care leaver up to 25 years of age with identified health need. Utilising this information, ECFWS can then provide and signpost appropriate support.	2026-31	Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Services (ECFWS) CBH
Young People *	Under new central government legislation, introduce a formal notification process to ensure schools, GP practices and health visiting services are informed when a child is placed into temporary accommodation, subject to consent, to support safeguarding, health and educational continuity.	2026-27	CBH
Rough Sleepers	Strengthen joint working with specialist partners to support people experiencing homelessness with mental health or substance misuse needs, ensuring coordinated access to health	2026-31	CBH Outreach Workers Beacon House Open Road Phoenix Futures

	engagement, treatment and housing support through multi-agency pathways.		
All Residents	Creation of a Homelessness Health Provision Transformation Group which will look at what is currently offered to the homeless community across Essex, identify the gaps and look to propose a standard commissioning model for primary care services for consideration by the ICB board in November 2026.	2026-27	NHS Essex Integrated Care Board

OBJECTIVE: **Co-produce services with people who have lived experience** of homelessness to ensure interventions are compassionate, accessible and effective.			
Cohort	**Action**	**Timeframe**	**Partners**
Lived Experience	The Homelessness Partnership Board will seek to include those with "lived experience" of homelessness during the ongoing and annual review processes.	2026-31	All Partners
Lived Experience	The Outreach Workers will conduct an annual survey with individuals who have experienced homelessness. The insights gathered will help shape future work and ensure their views and experiences are reflected	2026-31	CBH Outreach workers CCC Housing Strategy Team

OBJECTIVE: **Maintain and further develop partnerships** across the voluntary, community and faith sectors, which play a critical role by providing outreach services, advice and support and tenancy sustainment.			
Cohort	**Action**	**Timeframe**	**Partners**
Domestic Abuse Sufferers	Achieve Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation by completing the assessment process and securing Board approval, while embedding a cross Council domestic abuse champion network to strengthen governance, awareness and consistency of response.	2026-27	CBH Housing Management Team CCC DAHA
All Residents	CCC and CBH to join and actively participate in the independently run Colchester Homelessness Forum, to strengthen partnership working, information sharing and	2026-27	CCC CBH

	coordinated service delivery for people experiencing homelessness.		
All Residents	Map all homelessness-related service provision in Colchester, including service scope, referral criteria and named points of contact, to strengthen coordination, improve signposting, reduce duplication and support more effective, joined-up responses for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.	2026-28	Homelessness Forum
All Residents	Work in partnership with local authorities, housing providers and the voluntary sector to collectively lobby Government for increased and sustainable funding to prevent homelessness, reduce reliance on temporary accommodation and meet rising housing need.	2026-2031	CCC Housing Strategy Team Homelessness Partnership Board

OBJECTIVE: **Strengthen data-sharing and joint working across health, education, social care, criminal justice, housing associations and voluntary sector partners** to identify early warning signs such as rent arrears, domestic abuse, relationship breakdown and mental ill health.			
Cohort	**Action**	**Timeframe**	**Partners**
Rough Sleepers	The Homelessness Partnership Board will seek to identify and obtain funding sources that could expand the use of In-Form to other Partners (beyond CBH Outreach workers). The system allows accurate recording and sharing of information across services.	2026-28	CCC Housing Strategy Team
All Residents	Development of a predictive analytics tool to identify households at risk of homelessness, enabling earlier, targeted intervention to prevent crisis and reduce reliance on temporary accommodation. This approach will improve long-term housing outcomes, reduce costs, and support more effective planning and tailored strategies.	2026-28	CCC CBH University of Essex
All Residents	*Work collaboratively with LGR partner authorities to support the delivery of Local Government Reorganisation, contributing to the development of a consistent, joined-up approach to homelessness prevention and supported housing across the new authority area.*	*2026-28*	*CCC* *Braintree District Council* *Tendring District Council* *ECC*

	NOTE – September 2026 – This action is paused pending further announcements from central government relating to LGR.		

OBJECTIVE: **Create a strengthened local Homelessness Partnership Board**, including input from people with lived experience to monitor the implementation of the strategy and agree adjustments to the Action Plan where needed.			
Cohort	**Action**	**Timeframe**	**Partners**
All Residents	Establish a refreshed Homelessness Partnership Board (HPB), aligned to the new strategy, to bring together public and third-sector partners to oversee delivery, monitor progress, and agree new and emerging actions.	2026-27	CCC Housing Strategy Team (lead) CBH, ECC, NHS Partners who provide Housing and Homelessness Services

AIM:
Enable people to access suitable homes

OBJECTIVE: **Improve access to stable, long-term accommodation**, building on Colchester's strategic aim to increase the availability of settled homes.			
Cohort	**Action**	**Timeframe**	**Partners**
All Users of TA	Improve, replace or decommission unsuitable temporary accommodation (TA) stock to ensure it meets required standards, improves safety and suitability, and reduces the use of poor-quality accommodation for households experiencing homelessness.	2026-31	CCC CBH
All Residents	Deliver Colchester City Council's current Housing Strategy through coordinated action across services and partners and undertake a review and development of a new Housing Strategy ahead of the expiry of the current framework to ensure continued alignment with local housing need, homelessness pressures and strategic priorities.	2026-31 (Strategy review in 2027)	CCC Housing Strategy Team All Partners
Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants	Work with the local community and voluntary sector, including Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Migrant Action (RAMA) and Essex Integration, to improve access to housing advice, accommodation pathways and wider support services for refugees, asylum seekers and migrant communities.	2026-31	RAMA Essex Integration CCC Communities Team

OBJECTIVE: **Work with registered providers** to maximise delivery of new affordable homes.			
Cohort	**Action**	**Timeframe**	**Partners**
Households on the Housing Register	Work in partnership with Registered Providers to maximise the delivery of new affordable homes that meet local need, with a focus on supporting homelessness prevention, reducing reliance on temporary accommodation, and providing appropriate	2026-31	CCC Housing Strategy Team Registered Providers

	move-on options for households at risk of or experiencing homelessness.		

OBJECTIVE: **Work with landlords to** promote responsible letting and reduce evictions wherever possible.			
Cohort	**Action**	**Timeframe**	**Partners**
Private Renters	Strengthen proactive engagement with private landlords to promote responsible letting practices, encourage early resolution of tenancy issues, and reduce avoidable evictions through advice, incentives, and partnership working with Housing Options, Private Sector Housing and Financial Inclusion services.	2026-31	CCC Private Sector Team CCC Financial Inclusion Team CBH Housing Options Team
Private Renters	Promote a fair and stable private rented sector by providing clear guidance on landlord responsibilities, using proportionate enforcement against illegal eviction, harassment and non-compliance, and supporting lawful possession processes to prevent unnecessary homelessness.	2026-31	CCC Private Sector Team

OBJECTIVE: **Support innovative development and acquisition models**, including the Council's housebuilding and acquisition programmes, to provide additional supply of affordable Council housing.			
Cohort	**Action**	**Timeframe**	**Partners**
Households on the Housing Register	Implement the Council's proposed Affordable Housing Development Plan (AHDP), delivering affordable homes that better reflect local need, prioritising larger family homes and 1 bedroom flats to assist move on from TA and including a proportion of smaller, accessible and energy-efficient homes for older residents, to improve stock utilisation, support independent living and reduce homelessness pressures.	2026-27	CCC Housing Strategy Team CBH Asset Management Team

OBJECTIVE: **Increase efforts to make the best use of the Council's housing stock by encouraging under-occupying households to rightsize.** This will free up larger family homes, helping to reduce waiting lists and ease pressures on temporary accommodation.			
Cohort	**Action**	**Timeframe**	**Partners**
Households on the Housing Register	Enhance the Council's "rightsizing" service through increased investment, practical support and dedicated officer capacity to encourage voluntary moves by under-occupying tenants, releasing larger family homes to reduce reliance on temporary accommodation and improve financial sustainability.	2026-27	CCC Housing Strategy Team CBH Housing Management Team

OBJECTIVE: **Work with partners to monitor the supply, quality and sustainability of Supported Housing** to meet the growing demand for this type of accommodation.			
Cohort	**Action**	**Timeframe**	**Partners**
Supported Housing	In line with new central government regulations (and previous action to produce a Supported Housing Strategy, in partnership with housing, health, social care and voluntary sector partners), implement and monitor the agreed strategy to align supply, support and pathways with identified need and reduce pressure on homelessness and temporary accommodation services.	2027-31	CCC Housing Strategy Team Braintree & Tendring Housing Strategy Teams ECC Joint Referral Panel

AIM:
Reduce the use of unsuitable temporary accommodation (TA)

The objectives relating to Temporary Accommodation are action-orientated and represent ongoing delivery commitments; as such, no additional actions are listed beneath them.

Cohort	Action	Timeframe	Partners
Households in Temporary Accommodation	Maintain enhanced monitoring of TA including length of stay, reasons for homelessness and move on outcomes.	2026-31	CBH CCC
	Identify the current need and demand for TA to provide insight into the type and size of TA required in the short and medium term.	2026-27	
	Minimise placements outside the district except when necessary for safety or specialist support.	2026-31	
	Eliminate the use of B&Bs for families, limiting stays to a maximum of six weeks where unavoidable.	2026-27	

Local Outcome Framework Targets

As part of the Government's approach to ending homelessness, the Local Outcomes Framework (LOF) establishes a common set of indicators for local authorities. These indicators support the monitoring of homelessness outcomes and help demonstrate the effectiveness of local action. Councils are expected to use baseline data to inform locally appropriate targets and measure progress against them throughout the implementation of their strategy. These targets are subject to regular review.

Metric	Baseline Data (Date)	2026 Target	2027 Target	2028 Target	2029 Target
Rate of households in temporary accommodation with children per 1,000 households	2.64 (July-Sep 25)	2.85	Maintain	2.7	2.5
Number of families in B&B over 6 weeks	2 (30 Sep 25)	0	Maintain Zero	Maintain Zero	Maintain Zero
Percentage of duties owed where homelessness was prevented or relieved	46% (July-Sep 25)	35%	40%	45%	50%
Percentage of duties owed where homelessness was prevented or relieved for households experiencing multiple disadvantage	65% (July-Sep 25)	65%	65%	70%	75%
Number of people sleeping rough on a single night	6 (November 25)	6	5	4	3
Number of people sleeping rough over the month who are long term	6 (November 25)	6	5	3	3