

## Sefton Homelessness Review and Strategy

In 2023, researchers from Imogen Blood & Associates were asked to review Sefton's Homelessness services. In July and August 2023, the researchers:

- visited twelve different homelessness services.
- spoke in depth to around 40 people who had used these services.
- spoke to 32 professionals, and another 27 professionals filled in a survey.
- looked at lots of information about homelessness in Sefton.

Imogen Blood & Associates have written a report about their research, including a draft strategy document and are developing an action plan. The draft strategy sets out 8 priorities recommended to Sefton Council (and organisations it works with) to tackle homelessness over the next 5 years.

The strategy and action plan will be published after people from Sefton have had a chance to tell us what they think about the following 8 priorities.

**The following table summarises the key findings and the related priority**

Priorities for the council	What information was the priority based on?
<b>Priority 1:</b> Improve accommodation and specialist care and support for people with high health and/or care needs – this might involve:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support workers have been able to help some people get the health and care they need; but these services are over-stretched, so sometimes this is patchy.</li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a homelessness social worker, who can help people get what they need,</li> <li>• new long-term supported housing options.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some supported housing residents need better access to mental health and drug and alcohol support.</li> <li>• Some people with high health and care needs are not getting the housing and care they need, especially on discharge from hospital; some will need this long-term.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority 2:</b> Make sure people in temporary/ supported accommodation get independent housing options support to find the right move-on option for them at the earliest opportunity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People want and need different types of housing: some would like to carry on living with other people (provided they have a choice); others need their own space.</li> <li>• Supported housing residents are not always getting the support they need to find the right move-on accommodation early on in their stay.</li> <li>• Where supported housing residents are placed in Band B, they feel stuck.</li> <li>• It is not always clear what people who have been banned from Property Pool Plus need to do to get back on it.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority 3:</b> Improve the quality of emergency bed and temporary accommodation provision and the support people get whilst staying there, so there is somewhere to go in the day and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People are staying in emergency beds – sometimes with no privacy – for too long.</li> <li>• Having to be out of the building during the day was the hardest thing for many.</li> <li>• There needs to be accessible accommodation, separate accommodation for women and better options for couples.</li> </ul>

<p>people do not have to share sleeping spaces.</p>	
<p><b>Priority 4:</b> Develop accommodation for those who are in or close to work, including younger people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some people want to and can work and save up for a private tenancy, but the way supported housing is funded makes this difficult.</li> <li>• People valued being able to take part in positive activities; some want skills training so they can get work, and chances to volunteer.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority 5:</b> Improve access to affordable housing for those coming through homelessness services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is not enough suitable settled housing: it is particularly hard to find 1-bed properties in places where people want to live.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority 6:</b> Focus more on 'hidden' homelessness, and preventing people getting evicted, especially from social tenancies and make sure everyone working with people at risk of homelessness knows how to advise them on their rights and can direct them to other services that can help.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is lots of homelessness that the council does not see.</li> <li>• More could be done by the council, housing associations and sometimes the Police to prevent people losing their homes in the first place.</li> <li>• There are lots of resources out there in the community to help, but not everyone finds out about them.</li> </ul>

**Priority 7:**

Keep funding and (if possible) fund more 'floating' support which can go into people's own homes to help stop them becoming homeless and make sure people know what floating support is available to them and how to get it.

- Some people lost past tenancies because they did not have the right support.
- Some worry that, if they are offered a home, they will not get the support they need to keep it.

**Priority 8:**

Sefton Housing Options has already made changes. It now has specialist housing 'link' workers in prison, for people experiencing domestic abuse, in Southport hospital, and visiting night shelters. It should carry on with these 'link workers', checking they are making a difference, and adding more where needed.

- Many people do not know about the services that are there if you are homeless or how to access them.
- Having to call Housing Options – or wait for a call back – is difficult for a lot of people.
- There is a lack of housing options on release from prison – people need advice earlier on in their sentence.