

OXFORD NEEDS HOMES

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Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 to 2028

Building a world-class city for everyone

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Notes to the reader:

*A glossary is included towards the end of this document. It has been included in order to help readers of this document get a good understanding of some of the terms, concepts and words used throughout this document. The words included in the glossary have been **marked in bold** the first time they appear in the main text of this document.*

This strategy has been written drawing information, data and evidence from Oxford City Council's Homelessness Review and Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Evidence Base that was published in June 2021, and updated in October 2022 and January 2023, and published alongside this strategy. The review and evidence base document contain full referencing.



Foreword

When we started developing a new Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy for the city and engaging the public on priorities last year, we started by stating the problem as we saw it – that Oxford is facing a housing and homelessness crisis.

The evidence for this is clear – the city's housing is some of the most unaffordable in the country when compared to local incomes – both to rent and to buy. Rough sleeping levels increased over the last decade and have remained stubbornly high. Our statutory homelessness services are under strain, due to many of the city's residents seeking help when faced with high rents. The city's housing stock requires investment to meet the challenges of a net zero carbon future. More good quality, affordable homes are needed, but land is scarce. These are all considerable problems, but problems that the Council is determined to tackle

Unfortunately, since starting out on developing our new strategy the housing challenges facing the city have only grown – from the cost of living crisis that is seeing rising bills for all, to our desire to provide sanctuary to people fleeing war zones and hardship in other parts of the world, and public services across the board under strain while trying to recover from the pandemic. All of these developments contribute further to the challenges of affordability in the city and the insufficient supply of homes in the city to those who need them.

The challenges the city faces in terms of housing and homelessness can at times seem overwhelming, but the Council is determined to tackle them and make a difference on the issues of unaffordability, insufficient supply, and the need for improved housing conditions to improve the homes and lives of the city's residents.

This strategy, developed by the Council in partnership with key stakeholders, sets out how the Council and its partners will do this. I believe the ambition contained in this document lays out a plan that will make progress against these key challenges in the years ahead, and highlights the steps we will take to meet the priorities we have committed to deliver. The five-year period of this strategy will see the Council making investment unprecedented in recent decades towards developing new social housing, investment into our tenants' homes, and roll out innovative and sector leading approaches to homelessness and rough sleeping, to name just a few of its commitments.

I look forward to working with the Oxford community and our partners and stakeholders, to deliver our commitments outlined in this strategy.



Councillor Linda Smith

Cabinet Member for Housing

Introduction – about this strategy

The effects of homelessness and the impact of not having a good quality home where you feel safe have devastating effects on people and families. This strategy – Oxford's Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy – sets the direction and priorities between 2023 and 2028 – for how we, together with partners, are going to address the housing and homelessness crisis in Oxford. It sets out the steps that we will take to meet our vision:

'By 2028, addressing Oxford's need for more affordable housing, improving the standard of housing in the city while lowering its carbon impact, with services and partnerships that are focussed on preventing people losing their homes, rapidly rehouse those who become homeless, and ending the need to sleep rough.'

This strategy has been in development since early 2021, with the creation of a homelessness review for the city and wider strategy evidence base. The review and evidence base pulls together the key information we needed to know in order to develop the ideas and direction of travel to address the housing and homelessness crisis in Oxford. The review and evidence base underpins and informs this strategy.

The review and evidence base includes information about levels of homelessness in the city, who is affected by homelessness, and why people are made homeless. It includes detailed information about what we as a Council and other organisations do to prevent homelessness. It also incorporates data and information about wider housing issues, such as the Council's role as a social landlord, what is happening in the private rented sector, the plans to build more affordable homes, and the need to tackle the role housing has in carbon emissions. Together, it forms a unified and clear picture of the current state of housing and homelessness in the city, as well as our challenges and opportunities, and informs the priorities for the Council for the next five years.

During summer 2021, we consulted on the review and evidence base, as well as a draft vision and emerging priorities for the new strategy. We wanted to make sure that the public, partners and stakeholders could have a say early on in the strategy development process, let us know if we had included all the relevant information we needed to look at, and if we had drawn the right conclusions and developed the right priorities. The feedback largely endorsed our work, which gave us the green light to draft our new strategy, taking on-board the feedback we received through the consultation.

We consulted on our draft strategy during late autumn 2022, and using feedback from this consultation, we updated and amended the strategy where necessary. The end result is the strategy you are reading right now. We also developed an action plan that now forms part of this strategy.

The housing and homelessness crisis in Oxford is not a situation that has developed recently. It has long been one of the most prominent issues for this city. Since the implementation of the last Housing and Homelessness Strategy in 2018, we have come a long way in meeting our strategic housing and homelessness goals.

We have increased **affordable housing** available to those in housing need, invested in the homes we own, successfully implemented new homelessness legislation, and increased the number of people we are assisting to prevent them from becoming homeless. We responded to the Covid-19 pandemic by changing the way people could access our services by moving Council services into our local communities.

Despite the successes and the progress we have made over the last few years, there is still more work to do. To make a significant difference for residents of the city, we face big challenges to deliver what we have set out to do under this strategy.

- The Council is facing rising costs due to inflation and will need to make tough financial choices over the coming years. The Council has seen a large reduction in incoming funds after a decade of austerity measures, and the Council's ability to generate income to fund services has been severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and cost of living crisis.
- Financial pressure on people in Oxford due to the cost of living crisis that has gripped the country in the aftermath of the pandemic, is likely to lead to more households becoming homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- Recent national predictions are that homelessness is going to increase and cause further pressure on local authorities.
- We still need to deliver more affordable homes in the city to meet housing need, and while there are plans in place to do so, supply needs to go further so that it will make a real impact on affordability in the city.
- Rents in the private rented sector remain too expensive and are continuing to rise.
- The expectations from Council tenants are rising, and we need to continue to improve our services.
- **Climate change**, and the impact of this that puts every region of the earth at risk, has led to us declaring a **climate emergency** in Oxford and setting an aim of Oxford as a city being **net zero carbon** by 2040. Domestic buildings in Oxford are one of the main contributors to carbon emissions that causes climate change. We need to make progress now to meet net zero carbon ambitions for domestic buildings in the city in order to help prevent the stark effects of climate change locally and globally – such as wildfire, flooding and droughts – from getting much worse.
- The city welcomes a high number of individuals and families fleeing war and violence to resettle in Oxford through various **resettlement schemes**, including the most recent '**Homes for Ukraine**' scheme. We will continue this work and will work to find long-term, sustainable housing solutions for them.

The challenges we face are significant. Our commitments and plans under this strategy are therefore ambitious.

The bigger picture in Oxford is crucial, as the ambition to address housing and homelessness issues is impossible without taking into account the Council's work and overall ambition. Oxford's Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy therefore sits alongside, and is aligned with, a number of other key Council strategies. In particular, this strategy speaks to the Council Strategy 2020-24.

The Council Strategy sets out the overall vision for the Council – 'Building a world-class city for everyone' – and the four key priorities that will get us there:

- Enable an inclusive economy
- Deliver more affordable housing
- Support thriving communities
- Pursue a zero carbon Oxford



The Council vision and priorities is the driving force of all our work.



Our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

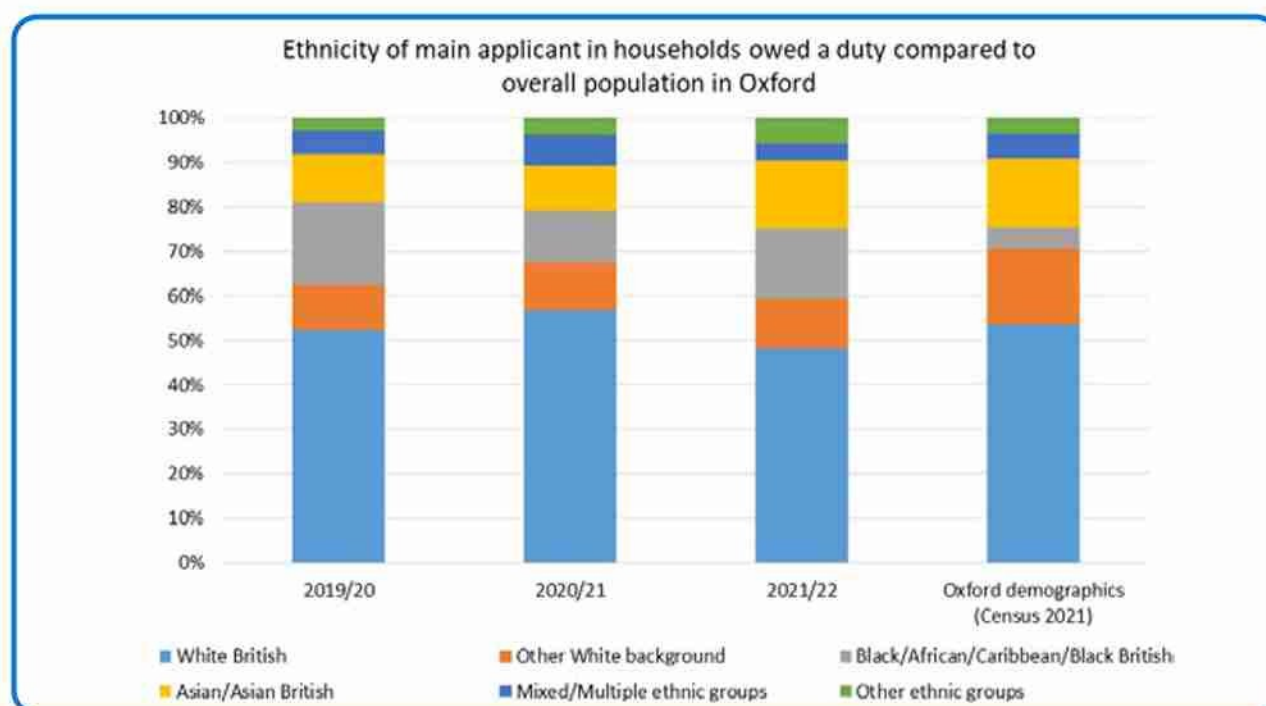
We know that homelessness affects people and communities differently in the city, and we know that certain groups are disproportionately affected by homelessness and poor housing conditions.

A key focus of all the Council's work - as outlined in our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy](#) - is to ensure that the Council's services, investments and policy-making are designed to address the city's social and economic inequalities.

Oxford's Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy embraces and incorporates this focus throughout, and informs our plans under every priority. We will make sure that our services are accessible, that our policies and practices do not discriminate, either directly or indirectly, that we understand the needs of communities in Oxford and of those seeking our assistance, and that we can react to changing trends.

This is how we are going to deliver these commitments:

- Work to deliver the Council's housing related commitments set out in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, including:
 - Ensuring that we understand and respond to issues that disproportionally affect specific groups in our community and that may lead to homelessness. For example, people (main applicant) describing their ethnicity as Black/African/Caribbean/Black British have been overrepresented in homelessness cases for many years compared to the overall share of the population in Oxford. We will seek to understand the reasons behind this better, and engage with service users in order to improve our services to combat this trend.



Source: [DLUHC Statistical data set: Live tables on homelessness for relevant periods](#) (main applicant of the household owed a duty describing their ethnicity) and Census 2021

- Work with communities to address any issues that disproportionately affects specific groups in order to better prevent homelessness;
- Review and improve how we engage with our tenants and leaseholders and ensure that inclusion is at the heart of this.
- Routinely report and use data to understand shifts in the profiles of people that we support in relation to homelessness, such as a recent decrease in the proportion of women presenting, in order to make sure that changes are not due to inaccessibility.
- Improve our data collection so that we can better understand how our services work for the community, with the aim to ensure that services are accessible to all and meeting the needs of all, such as the LGBTQIA+ community.
- Continue to consider the needs of the travelling community, and seek to work in partnership with our neighbouring authorities to commission a new study of need for the period up to 2040.
- Conduct comprehensive Equality Impact Assessments in line with best practice for key policies and working practices, such as the **Tenancy Strategy** and the **Allocations Policy**, to ensure that there is truly fair access to our services for those with protected characteristics.
- Ensure information and communication is accessible, through using a range of mediums and accessible language.
- Provide training for all of our staff to ensure they are all skilled and confident in delivering services and work with Human Resources partners to have a workforce that as a whole reflects Oxford's diverse population.



Improving accessibility of our services

As a Council, we know that we need to change the way we communicate and work with residents, as well as change and adapt the way residents can communicate and get in touch with us. This came to the forefront during the pandemic, when our offices closed and we moved to digital and phone contact with Oxford residents.

Our housing services have historically been too reliant on residents seeing us face-to-face and for documentation and information to be provided in hard-copy, either by posting this to us or handing it in at one of our offices. Providing more facilities and opportunities for people we assist to provide information and an ability to access our services online, to have digital 'help yourself' facilities, and moving to IT solutions where our officers can do more 'on the go', will make our services both more customer friendly, by fitting around people's lives, and more efficient.

Our need to improve our IT systems and expand our digital offer to include more ways for the community to access our services and communicate with us, are key considerations for our commitments under this strategy and include:

- Complete a rollout of our new IT system, which will enable new innovative approaches to the delivery of services for tenants, including greater ability for our tenants to access self-service options online.
- Achieve greater efficiency in how we deliver services by moving to provide more services and assistance 24 hours a day online and via self-serve options, including submitting applications to join the **housing register** and provide supporting information.
- Deliver improved communications and engagement activities to our tenants using digital means.
- Develop facilities that allows us to get feedback digitally as soon as residents have received a service, so that we can use this to make changes in real time.

However, accessing our range of services online or via the phone is not the best option at all times, and for many people, it will never be the best option. While embracing new technologies, we will therefore also reaffirm our commitment to continue to offer a face-to-face service for people who need our assistance, including our tenants, those who are worried about their housing situation, and those who are facing homelessness.

Housing-led solutions to homelessness

The number of individuals and families who are homeless or threatened with homelessness in Oxford has been too high for too long. We are therefore adapting and changing the approach we take to resolving homelessness, by implementing a **housing-led** approach to the services we deliver.

A housing-led approach means that homelessness is resolved by offering people their own, secure home as quickly as possible. A housing-led approach is key to successful homelessness prevention as support and advice is provided so that people can stay in, and maintain, their own home for the long term.

The fundamental aspects of a housing-led approach have informed key strands of this strategy and cut across our priorities, and include:

- **Rapid re-housing** of homeless households. If households become homeless and need to access **temporary accommodation**, we will aim for their stay in such accommodation to be as short as possible. We will work with households to find and move to a permanent home as quickly as possible – they will be rapidly re-housed.
- Whenever possible, we will make sure that households that are in need of extra support receive this either through our own services, or by working with other organisations to put a good support package in place. This will ensure that homelessness can be prevented in the future.
- Provide more **Housing First** style accommodation. We are moving away from using **congregate style accommodation** for those experiencing rough sleeping. Congregate style accommodation can often be detrimental, lead to abandonment of accommodation and thus repeat homelessness. Instead, evidence has shown that we are more likely to help break the cycle of homelessness by providing a permanent home and support to stay in that home for those with the most **complex needs**. Housing First accommodation is provided without putting up any barriers or conditions, for example that people need to have a good tenancy history, that they are engaging with services, or abstaining from substances.
- Increase the number of one bedroom properties available for private and social rent in the city. This will enable more single persons and couples that are homeless to move into their own home that they can afford.

Effectively implementing and delivering this housing-led approach is key to Oxford seeing a reduction in homelessness across the board in the longer term.

Our priorities and actions

This strategy sets out five priority areas that will drive and focus the Council's work to realise our vision for housing, homelessness and rough sleeping.

These priorities, and the commitments and plans we have set out to achieve these priorities, come from carefully reviewing all of the information and learning gained from the review and evidence base, the responses and feedback we received to our consultation on the draft strategy, together with the strategic direction and aims of the Council set out in the [Council Strategy](#). They are focussed on meeting the key challenges we identified, such as the acute affordability issues in the Oxford housing market, the need to tackle carbon emissions from housing, and the need to go further to prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping.

We cannot deliver this work alone, and we will work closely with the community and partner organisations to ensure that our commitments are delivered.





Our five priorities are:

Providing more, affordable homes

Why? There are not enough affordable homes in the city and this means that people pay a large proportion of their income towards housing costs, putting financial pressure on families that may cause homelessness.

Great homes for all

Why? Everyone should have a safe and good quality home, whether living in social or private rented housing.

Housing for a net zero carbon future

Why? Domestic buildings are one of the largest contributors to carbon emissions in Oxford, and therefore one of the main contributors to climate change. We need to reduce these emissions now to be able to reach the aim of Oxford as a city being net zero carbon by 2040.

Preventing homelessness and adopting a rapid rehousing approach

Why? No one should lose the place they call home – it is traumatising and affects wider life chances. If this does happen, people need to be assisted to find a new home as quickly as possible.

Ending rough sleeping

Why? No one should need to sleep rough on the streets of Oxford.

This strategy is accompanied by an action plan that sets out how we will deliver our commitments over the life of the strategy. The action plan will be updated regularly so that it stays relevant to the ever-changing context we are operating within. You can find more details about this in the 'Governance and delivery of the strategy' chapter below.

Priority 1

Providing more, affordable homes

By the end of this strategy period, we are seeking to:

- Significantly increase the number of affordable homes delivered in the city. Building, enabling and supporting the development of enough homes in the city and surrounding districts to meet the overall housing need in Oxford, through the development of the right mix of property sizes and **tenure types**.
- Deliver the biggest affordable house building programme in Oxford since the 1970s, work with OX Place and our **housing association** partners to collectively deliver a forecast of over 1,600 affordable homes in the city over the next four years.
- Let the majority of the Council's new affordable homes at a social rent level, approximately 40% of the market rent.
- Work closely with housing associations to ensure Oxford is seen as a good place to build homes, and use planning policy and influence to ensure greatest housing needs are met.
- Ensure a range of tenure types are developed for affordable homes, such as **shared ownership**, to meet the needs of those struggling to afford private rents in Oxford.
- Continue to work with our neighbouring authorities to progress housing developments across the county that help meet housing need in Oxfordshire and create strong communities with good local amenities and sustainable transport links into the city, delivering over 7,000 as affordable tenures by 2031.
- Support an increase in the supply of homes through new and innovative approaches, such as **Community-led Housing**, and by bringing empty homes back into use.
- Continue to take steps to meet the unmet needs of people who require more specialist forms of accommodation, such as disability adapted properties and homes for people with complex needs, in line with **Local Plan** policies.
- Develop an approach that will support the Council to utilise the land it owns for housing development, and encourage strategic partners in the city to do likewise.
- Influence central government policy on short-term lets, making the case for local government to gain new powers to regulate the market to prevent the displacement of local residents and take local action as appropriate.



How the Council and partners are going to do this

Increase the rate of affordable housing development, including Council homes through the affordable housing supply programme

Build over 1,600 affordable, high quality and energy efficient homes through OX Place, the Council and housing association partners.

Deliver over 850 affordable homes available at a social rent, delivered by OX Place, the Council and housing association partners.

Ensure significant investment from the Council's **Housing Revenue Account** goes into the development of new affordable homes during the strategy period.

Explore options and feasibility of developing small and adjoining sites.

Offer support and partnership to developers, **registered providers**, landowners, social landlords and community-led housing groups to encourage the delivery of new affordable homes.

Take available steps to secure and deploy public investment where this is available to make further affordable housing development viable in Oxford and Oxfordshire, including **Homes England** funding and wider infrastructure funds.

Work to ensure that new affordable homes delivered meet established and projected need for affordable housing, including increasing the number of units available for Housing First; larger homes to meet acute need to house larger families, sufficient housing that is disability-adapted (for example for wheelchair users).

Support and encourage the use of factory-built housing and modular construction.

Provide homes for those struggling in the Oxford housing market

Deliver an ambitious shared ownership development programme.

Engage with the delivery of First Homes where this helps to meet local need and where it does not negatively affect the viability and deliverability of affordable housing in Oxford.

Review and implement a new Tenancy Strategy to recognise the new tenure types the Council is developing, and to ensure households in different income groups can access different housing models.

Continue our work to bring empty homes back into occupancy, ensuring that the number of empty properties in Oxford reduces.

Purchase properties using funds from retained receipts from Right to Buy sales and borrowing in the Housing Revenue Account and let these properties to people on the housing register.

Continue to lobby central government to introduce controls around the short-let market in the city to prevent the loss of residential homes to this sector.

Take appropriate action where a house has changed into short-term let/holiday accommodation without the correct planning permission.

Work better with our housing delivery partners and neighbouring councils

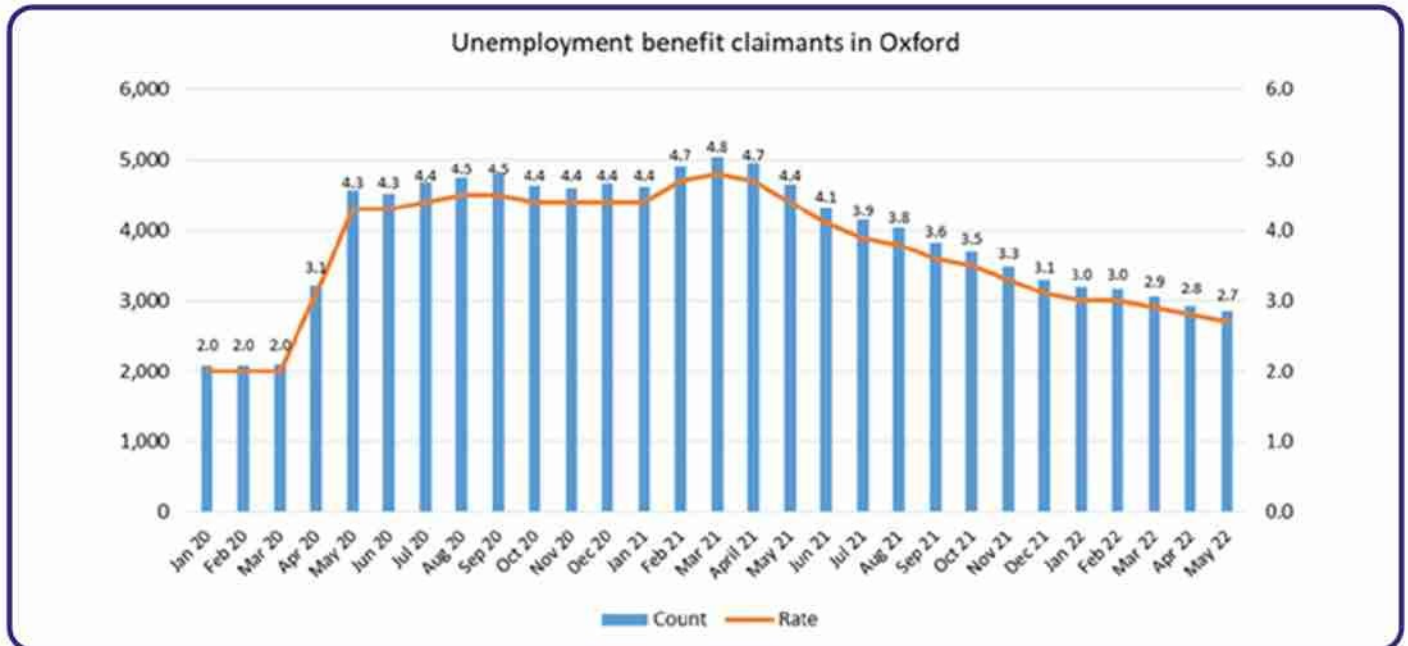
Work with neighbouring councils to support the delivery of a number of developments in Oxfordshire that will help meet housing need for the whole county, and make effective agreements with the District Councils so that Oxford residents in need of affordable housing can access homes across Oxfordshire.

Support and identify opportunities for community-led housing developments.

Work with our partner Peabody with the aim of delivering the regeneration scheme in Blackbird Leys.

Why we need more affordable housing

Oxford is densely populated, surrounded by green belt and rural countryside. Land for new development of housing is significantly constrained. Oxford has a strong economy, with more jobs than people of working age. Unemployment increased through the pandemic, but has now returned to near pre-pandemic levels.



Source: ONS Claimant count, May 2022 (Nomis)

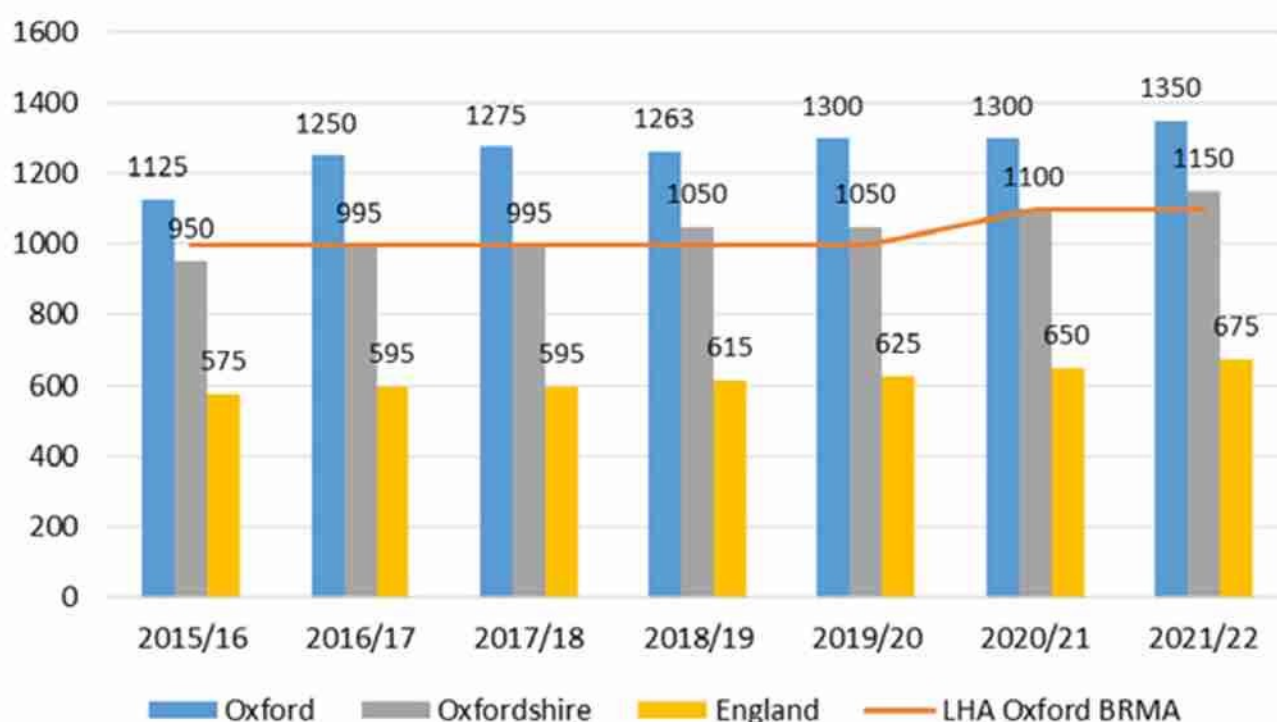
A strong economy with many opportunities attract people to come to Oxford. This is positive, but puts significant pressure on the housing market. The latest Census shows that the population grew 6.7% between 2011 and 2021. Oxford has become one of the least affordable places to live in the UK as house prices have increased much more than earnings for a number of years. According to the Office for National Statistics, in 2021 the **median** house price in Oxford was 12.32 times the median gross earnings in the city, compared to a national **average** of 8.96 times the median earnings.



Source: House price and earnings data taken from [ONS data report](#)

Renting a home in the private rented sector is also expensive. Homes at the lower price end of the market are especially expensive in Oxford compared to England as a whole. This means that people on low incomes cannot afford to rent even the cheapest homes in the city. With high and increasing rents in this sector, a large proportion of people's income go towards housing costs. The Council has limited power to influence private rents as local authorities have no controls over rent setting in the private rented sector.

3-bedroom properties - lower quartile rent



Source: ONS Private rental market summary statistics in England

The private rented sector has grown in Oxford over the last 20 years, and compared to the England average, a significantly higher proportion of homes are let through private landlords. The 2021 Census shows that 32% of households in Oxford rent their home in the private rented sector, compared to 20% in the rest of England.

Despite Oxford's economic success, Oxford is a city with inequalities and poverty. Whilst most neighbourhoods in the city are in the 'least deprived' half of the **Index of Multiple Deprivation** rankings, a significant number of areas in Oxford (17 out of 83) are in the most deprived 30% in the country. The high costs of housing is a contributing factor, and after housing costs, one in four children live below the poverty line in Oxford. The Covid-19 pandemic, followed by the cost of living crisis, has further exposed the extent of inequalities in Oxford, with those already experiencing inequality being disproportionately affected.

Oxford Needs Homes

The Housing and Economic Needs Assessment 2022 (Cherwell and Oxford City councils) estimates that 740 social rent/affordable homes need to be delivered every year in Oxford if all households who are not able to meet their housing needs in the housing market were to be allocated a home they can afford. However, in the last decade, much less affordable housing has been delivered than there is need for. There is now an acute need for affordable housing in the city.

Affordable Housing New Build and Acquisitions



Over the last few years, we have made good progress to address this. Between April 2018 and the end of March 2022, over 555 affordable homes were delivered in Oxford. The **Future Oxfordshire Partnership**, a joint committee of the six councils of Oxfordshire together with key strategic partners, has helped secure over £500 million of investment in housing and infrastructure across the county. The Council-owned company OX Place has started housing developments on sites across the city, the Council and its partners have built social housing at Barton Park, and we have worked with our neighbouring Districts to develop agreements on how they can help meet Oxford's unmet housing needs, including agreeing nominations agreements for social housing in the Districts for households who are on the City Council's housing register.

How to deliver the homes we need

Our new strategy will see us step up our activity in the next five years, building on the major progress of recent years, to deliver the biggest increase in social housing since the 1970s. We need to work with partners to significantly increase the number of affordable homes delivered in the city, alongside delivery of new Council homes through the Council's wholly-owned housing company OX Place. There needs to be development of enough homes, both in the city and in the surrounding areas to meet the overall housing need in Oxford, including different property sizes and different tenure types.

Our housing association partners also play a key role here. Together with OX Place and housing associations, there are plans in place to build over 1,600 affordable homes in the city over the next four years, with a large proportion of these homes available at social rent. These homes will be of high quality, they will be energy efficient, with the majority let to people on our housing register at a genuinely affordable rent, and with some sold as shared ownership. Regeneration schemes, such as Blackbird Leys, will also see more homes in Oxford and we are aiming to develop this scheme in partnership with Peabody.

Oxfordshire as a whole has a shortage of affordable homes, and we will continue to work with our neighbouring local authorities to create strong communities with good local amenities and sustainable transport links. The aim to meet housing need for Oxfordshire by 2031 will see over 7,000 affordable homes built in neighbouring council areas that Oxford residents will be able to move into.

Breakdown of affordable home developments, which includes social rent, affordable rent, shared ownership housing units:

	Timeline	Location	Home developments
Housing associations, OX Place and the Council	over the next four years	In Oxford	around 1,600
Oxfordshire unmet housing need in Districts	by 2031	In neighbouring districts	around 7,000

We will work to ensure that the homes built in the city will be determined by what is needed, both in terms of size and tenure. The housing need assessment carried out as part of the evidence base of the Local Plan 2040 will be central here, as it considers the wide range of need for affordable housing. Demand for affordable one-bedroom properties has increased over the last few years and our development plans seeks to address this. We also know that we currently have a good supply of housing for elderly persons. Over the next few years, we will however review some of the existing provision to ensure that it is the right kind of accommodation as well as sufficient to meet future demand. Through the use of the City Council's planning policies, we will continue to have set requirements for accessible and adaptable homes, including wheelchair-user standards. As a Council, we are now for the first time managing shared-ownership properties, and this is something we will continue to develop as we recognise that this helps many households buy a stake in a home, that they would otherwise not be able to afford.

Making the best use of the residential properties that exist in Oxford is also important in order to increase the provision of much needed housing in the city. The number of domestic buildings that are empty for long periods of time has unfortunately increased over the last few years, despite our efforts to tackle this trend. Over the last few years, we have worked with owners of empty homes to bring them back into use, and we will continue to do so. We will do this by supporting owners, and if necessary, we will use enforcement powers to do so. We are looking to increase the use of formal action to bring empty homes back into use, including, where appropriate, the implementation of **Empty Dwelling Management Orders**, both where this is being made with the support of property owners and where owners are not engaging or willing to take part in the process.

Homes that are used only part of the year as second homes are a further issue that contributes to there being fewer homes available for those in need and putting pressure on the general housing market in Oxford. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill that is currently making its way through Parliament makes provisions to allow local authorities to introduce a new discretionary council tax premium on second homes of up to 100%, and to apply a council tax premium of up to 100% on homes that have been empty for longer than one year (rather than two years at present). Should the bill, including these provisions, be enacted, we are determined to introduce these changes to council tax charges, in an effort to make more homes available for those in need.

There has also been an increase in the number of short-term lets in Oxford over the last few years. Properties rented out as short-term lets results in fewer properties being available for longer-term lets for households in housing need in Oxford. As a Council, we have limited power to tackle this trend. There is no requirement for short-term lets to be licensed, or for landlords to notify the Council when a property has been converted into a short-term let. The change to short-term let may require planning permission. However, this has to be determined on a case by case basis. We have taken successful planning enforcement action where the use of a house has changed into holiday accommodation without such permission. Since 2018, we have repeatedly called for the Government to introduce effective regulation on short-term lets and we will continue to do so.

We will work to enable housing supply from different sources, including supporting groups and organisations that want to develop community-led housing, and continuing to work collaboratively with the city's universities and colleges to drive the delivery of more affordable housing units, both of which are measures that contributes to more people being able to find a home that they can afford to live in.



Priority 2

Great homes for all

By the end of this strategy period, we are seeking to:

- Work to drive up standards in Oxford's private rented housing sector, through the use of our regulatory powers and the operation of property licensing, covering the whole private rented sector.
- Improve the quality of Council homes and surrounding neighbourhoods through continued investment in homes, communal areas and estates, ensuring high standards, compliance, good maintenance, higher levels of energy efficiency, and guided by tenant voices and views.
- Transform the services we deliver to our tenants, to improve tenant satisfaction about their homes, their neighbourhood, and the services we deliver to them.
- Continue to develop a new, integrated and locality-based way of working to deliver services to our communities, where Council teams work better together across departments to assist our tenants when they are in need.
- Deliver an improved approach to tenant engagement and involvement, with clear strategies and adequate resourcing to make sure that we have systems in place to receive feedback on the services we provide and the condition of tenants' accommodation, and that we can use such feedback effectively to develop and improve our services as well as to make decisions as a landlord.
- Deliver our Thriving Communities Strategy, which will take a holistic look to ensure homes are part of a wider thriving community, and work closely with our communities as part of our healthy place shaping agenda.
- Continue to effectively manage the Council's Housing Revenue Account, ensuring overall spending priorities are delivered, and that we deliver investment into affordable housing development, **decarbonisation**, and the improvement of Council homes.
- Become fully compliant with the Government's Social Housing **White Paper**, meeting the new customer regulatory standards, new **decent homes standard**, and being fully compliant with building safety changes, with tenants able to judge and benchmark our performance through new national landlord tenant satisfaction measures.



How the Council and partners are going to do this

Improve the quality of accommodation in the private rented sector

Deliver our city-wide **selective licensing scheme** and continue to deliver the city-wide additional **Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)** licensing scheme to help ensure that accommodation in the private rented sector is of good quality; and to maintain and improve compliance of HMOs in the city.

Through property licensing, work proactively to reduce the percentage of privately rented homes that contain serious home hazards through increased number of property visits and increasing the number of HMOs that are compliant with the HMO licensing scheme.

Continue to deliver investment into our Council homes

Develop a programme of rolling annual **stock condition surveys**, which will see all our domestic buildings having condition surveys every five years, in order to keep information about our properties accurate and up to date.

Use stock condition surveys to ensure a consistent and updated **asset management strategy** is in place, which will include and provide a coordinated work plan for maintenance, investment, regeneration and carbon reduction works.

Invest a committed £51m into our Council homes in line with our asset management strategy, to ensure homes are fully compliant and of good quality, taking into account all priorities, including energy efficiency, decarbonisation, decency and safety.

Provide quality, timely and responsive services to Council tenants, with high levels of tenant satisfaction

Establish a comprehensive transformation programme of our Landlord Services, leading to improved services for our tenants, ensuring all our tenants and leaseholder related activities are resourced sufficiently and comply with the Social Housing White Paper.

Deliver a new, integrated and locality-based way of working to deliver services to our communities. This approach brings together different Council functions and local networks to deliver enhanced and joined-up services in the community, with better customer journeys and outcomes.

Work collaboratively with **Oxford Direct Services (ODS)** to ensure that repair services delivered for our tenants are excellent and at our tenants' convenience, make the fix the first time whenever possible, and having it stay fixed.

Provide quality, timely and responsive services to Council tenants, with high levels of tenant satisfaction

Use a combination of annual tenant surveys and **transactional surveys** to gain an accurate and clear picture of tenant satisfaction with the repairs process, which is then able to respond to feedback and to drive service development and improvement.

Complete the rollout of our new housing IT system, which will enable new innovative approaches to how we deliver services for and communicate with tenants, including greater ability for our tenants to self-serve online.

Continue to support tenants affected by antisocial behaviour, and respond to their feedback on developing any improvements.

Improve tenant engagement and tenant involvement to enhance accountability and put tenants' views at the heart of decision-making and service development

Establish refreshed aims and purpose for our tenant engagement and involvement activities. Align aims and purposes with the priorities tenants have expressed through feedback, following best practice in our approach and ensuring that activities are resourced effectively so that we meet the Charter for Social Housing Residents introduced in the Social Housing White Paper.

Establish a scrutiny function that allows tenants to better hold the Council and Oxford Direct Services to account and to influence outcomes.

Take steps to ensure we meet our statutory obligations to release our results against the new national tenant consumer standards, as set out in the Social Housing White Paper, so that tenants can judge our performance, and once all social landlords are in compliance, can benchmark us as a landlord.

Ensure that tenants and leaseholders involved in engagement and involvement activity, including the tenant ambassadors, reflect the geographic and demographic diversity of Council tenants.

The need for a good home

Everyone deserves to live in a good quality, secure and safe home, whether they rent their accommodation from a private or social landlord. Housing conditions have a great impact on people's physical and mental health. Living in poor housing, homes that are damp and cold, in an insecure tenancy, in a time-limited or non-permanent tenancy, or living in overcrowded conditions, can all cause significant stress and have a negative impact on both physical and mental health, as well as education and work. Housing conditions, therefore, have great effects on ultimate life chances. The introduction of the Decent Homes Standard for social housing in the early 2000s has improved conditions for many. However, there is still a long way to go in addressing issues of poor-quality homes across all sectors, as well as insecurity of tenures and affordability so that these issues will not negatively affect people and communities.

Addressing serious housing safety issues can be a cost-effective way to reduce some of the financial burdens on our health and social care services and provide early support for anyone who is vulnerable due to their health, wellbeing or personal circumstances. In Oxford, Oxford City's Home Improvement Agency (HIA) offers grants and support to vulnerable people who live in homes that are in poor condition or who need adaptations to properties that are unsuitable for their needs. They aim to prevent situations from worsening and result in homelessness, as well as enabling residents to work towards independence in all its forms. As such, this work is an important contributor to the prevention of homelessness in the city.

In addition to improving people's homes, we can also introduce other preventative measures linked to the place someone lives that will help reduce the inequalities in our city, help people increase their general prospects, wellbeing and life chances. Through the Council's new Thriving Communities Strategy, the Council has a strong focus on this work through encouraging well-designed neighbourhoods and parks where healthy lifestyles are the norm, developing skills, ensuring growth in the city is inclusive, strengthening communities and improving access to leisure, sports and the arts. We have already introduced measures and activities that have had great success over the last few years.

Through our **Youth Ambition** programme, we have made more activities available for young people, including youth clubs, holiday schemes and multi-sports sessions. Such activities play an important role in reducing adverse childhood experiences, which can lead to a range of negative outcomes in later life, such as homelessness. As such, the work carried out through colleagues in our community outreach teams, serves as important homelessness prevention measures. In addition to this, we have also offered free access to our leisure centres for people experiencing rough sleeping.

Challenges in the private rented sector

According to the 2021 Census, the number of households in Oxford that rent their accommodation in the private rented sector is very large (32%) compared to the average of 20% across England as a whole. Renting in the private sector is expensive, and unfortunately, there is also evidence that the housing conditions in parts of this sector can too often be poor. A review carried out by METASTREET on behalf of the Council in 2020, estimated that over 6,000 homes in the private rented sector contained a serious home hazard, with the most common hazards relating to fire safety and excess cold. We know that the quality of housing can have a great impact upon people's physical and mental health, and we are therefore committed to working with private landlords to improve conditions.

We have operated an additional licensing scheme in Oxford for houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) since 2011. The scheme was brought in to address problems associated with poor management of HMOs. The scheme has been very successful in bringing up standards and protecting tenants.

Building on the past success of measures to improve the private sector, the Council made a successful bid to the Government for a citywide selective licensing scheme that will be applicable for all properties rented out in the private sector. The scheme offers a massive opportunity to improve the sector, ensuring landlords are fit and proper and that properties meet a minimum standard and are safe places to live. It is estimated that over 12,000 homes in the city will require a selective licence.

Oxford is currently the only local authority in the UK to operate property licensing across the whole of the private rented sector.



The Council as a landlord

According to the 2021 Census, 21% of all households in Oxford live in **social rented housing**. The City Council is the largest social landlord in the city, with around 7,800 homes that we own and let to those in housing need. The vast majority of Council properties are charged at a social rent level, which is typically around 40% of market rent charged for similar properties. We manage all aspects of these properties, including the allocation process, arranging lettings agreements, providing assistance and support to our residents, and repairing and maintaining the properties and their surroundings.

As a landlord, we have a great responsibility to ensure that our properties are of good quality, that our tenants' homes receive the maintenance and repairs that are needed, and that neighbourhoods are well-maintained and safe. Over the last few years, we have delivered all the schemes that were identified under the Great Estates programme, which means that there have been improvements to neighbourhoods and the way our residents use them. We have also completed the refurbishment of the tower blocks owned by the Council, and delivered considerable investment into Council homes in general.



Our strategy lays out our ambition to improve the homes we own and the services we offer to our tenants over the next few years. It commits us to continued investment into the homes we own, communal areas and estates to ensure high standards of compliance, good levels of maintenance and better energy efficiency.

One of the main priorities going forward will be to develop a programme of transformation for our landlord services that will see significant change in how we deliver our services, making them more responsive, accessible and joined up across different Council teams. This is in response to feedback we have received from tenants, the recommendations of an external review of our Landlord Services, the review of tenant engagement and tenant involvement by the Scrutiny Committee, and the changes to legislation we are governed by.

A major aspect of how we need to change has been informed by how the pandemic challenged us to rethink how we deliver our services in our neighbourhoods. In response to the pandemic, the Council delivered more services in the communities – a locality-based model – during the lockdowns. This offered an improved way of delivering services closer to our communities that we want to continue in the future. Therefore, the Council has introduced an integration of services that will focus on strengthening connections between existing teams in the Council, local communities, residents, and partner organisations.

We also want to modernise and use new technologies in the way services are delivered. This will include giving our tenants greater ability to self-service through the internet, more information will be available 'at the touch of a button', and the use of new technologies will make us more efficient and effective in how we maintain our housing stock.

Change doesn't just apply to the Council's core landlord services. Many of the repairs and maintenance services for our homes are carried out by the Council-owned company Oxford Direct Services (ODS) and we will work closely with them to deliver a change to tenant repairs services, increasing convenience and tenant satisfaction.

We welcome the increase in Government regulation into the social housing sector, and through this strategy, we will deliver the required changes for our tenants. One of the biggest changes is the introduction of the Social Housing White Paper, which will strengthen the tenant voice to influence decisions about their homes and neighbourhoods and increase consumer standards. The Building Safety Act brings about increased regulation for building safety, including a requirement for there to be an Accountable Person who is legally responsible for assessing and managing fire and structural risks for high-risk buildings, along with other measures.

We will also take major steps to empower our tenants through enhanced engagement and involvement work, with a clear approach and increased resourcing. This will enable routine feedback on our services and investment, as well as the condition of accommodation. We will use this feedback to help develop and improve the services we offer, as well as inform the decisions we make as a landlord. We carried out a tenant survey in 2021 that helped inform this direction, and we are committed to continue to collect this form of feedback through regular tenant and transactional surveys.



Priority 3

Housing for a net zero carbon future

By the end of this strategy period, we are seeking to:

- Deliver commitments set out in the Council's Net Zero Carbon Action Plan to realise a significant reduction in carbon emissions from residential buildings in the city.
- Ensure all new homes are built to high standards, using contractors that are experienced in low energy development, accessible design and high levels of energy efficiency to support Oxford's journey towards net zero carbon by 2040.
- Homes built through the Council's housing company OX Place are built to high standards, gradually improving performance in order to meet the target that Oxford as a city is net zero carbon by 2040.
- Improve the energy efficiency of Council owned domestic buildings through a significant investment programme.
- Bring improvements to energy efficiency standards in the private rented sector in Oxford.



How the Council and partners are going to do this

Improve standards for new developments of council housing in the city

New homes built by OX Place are net zero carbon for energy use in the properties (**regulated operational energy**) by 2030.

Homes built by OX Place use electricity only and are heated through low carbon means such as air source **heat pumps**.

Homes built by OX Place have carbon emission levels for new homes that are 40% below the **national standards (Building Regulations 2021)**.

Deliver new homes using a new procurement framework aimed at **off-site manufacture (OSM)** of new homes.

Build as far as possible using a '**fabric-first**' approach (air-tight and well-insulated) and where not already in place, enabling on-site renewable energy such as **solar PV panels** to be added easily at a later date.

Tackling the **performance gap** and preventing any performance issues with new technologies by using an innovative **energy quality assurance service**. This provides checking, training and testing throughout the full design and construction phases of development.

Invest to decarbonise our Council homes

Ensure a consistent and updated asset management strategy is in place and provides a coordinated plan for maintenance, investment, regeneration and carbon reduction work for Council properties.

Tie energy efficiency works into other planned maintenance programmes to ensure a co-ordinated and less disruptive approach to delivery, improving tenant experience.

Work with tenants to agree and implement a programme of energy efficiency measures that will see tenants' energy use reduced, with the aim of reducing the number of tenants refusing energy efficiency improvements.

Continue to bid for central government funding to fund our work to increase energy efficiency for our housing stock.

Work with other landlords, such as property developers, registered providers and private rented sector landlords to increase energy efficiency, both for existing buildings and new developments

Continue to set high standards for energy efficiency/carbon reduction for new-build homes through local plan policies including the new Local Plan 2040.

Work with partners to apply for funding, and through signposting, assist home-owners, tenants and landlords in the private rented sector to access funding for energy efficiency and decarbonisation measures to increase efficiency standards for properties.

Bring improvements to energy efficiency to the private rented sector by other means, including the promotion of the **Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES)**.

Ensure residents in the city can access consistent and quality energy advice in relation to both property improvements and energy usage through various means, including the **Home Improvement Agency**.

Work with the **Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership** to trial innovative approaches to different retrofit approaches, scale delivery, and share best practice.



Climate emergency

Climate change is arguably the most significant threat to humankind at this time. Caused by the build-up of greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere, released by burning fuels that we use daily to heat our homes, travel and transport goods, climate change is caused by human influence, harming the planet and putting billions of people at risk. In January 2019, Oxford City Council declared a climate emergency in Oxford and agreed to set up a Citizens' Assembly to consider new carbon targets and additional measures to reduce emissions, and thus do what we can to slow climate change. In response to the clear message coming from the Assembly, we, as a Council, have taken on a leading role in reducing emissions and increasing biodiversity in the city.

In February 2021, we held a Zero Carbon Oxford Summit, attended by leaders from all major organisations in Oxford to map the city's journey towards net zero carbon. Those attending the summit signed a Charter, setting the ambition to help Oxford as a city become net zero carbon by 2040. The Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership was established at the summit, and this partnership has since established and is delivering a new science-based roadmap and action plan outlining how the city can reach net zero carbon emissions by 2040.

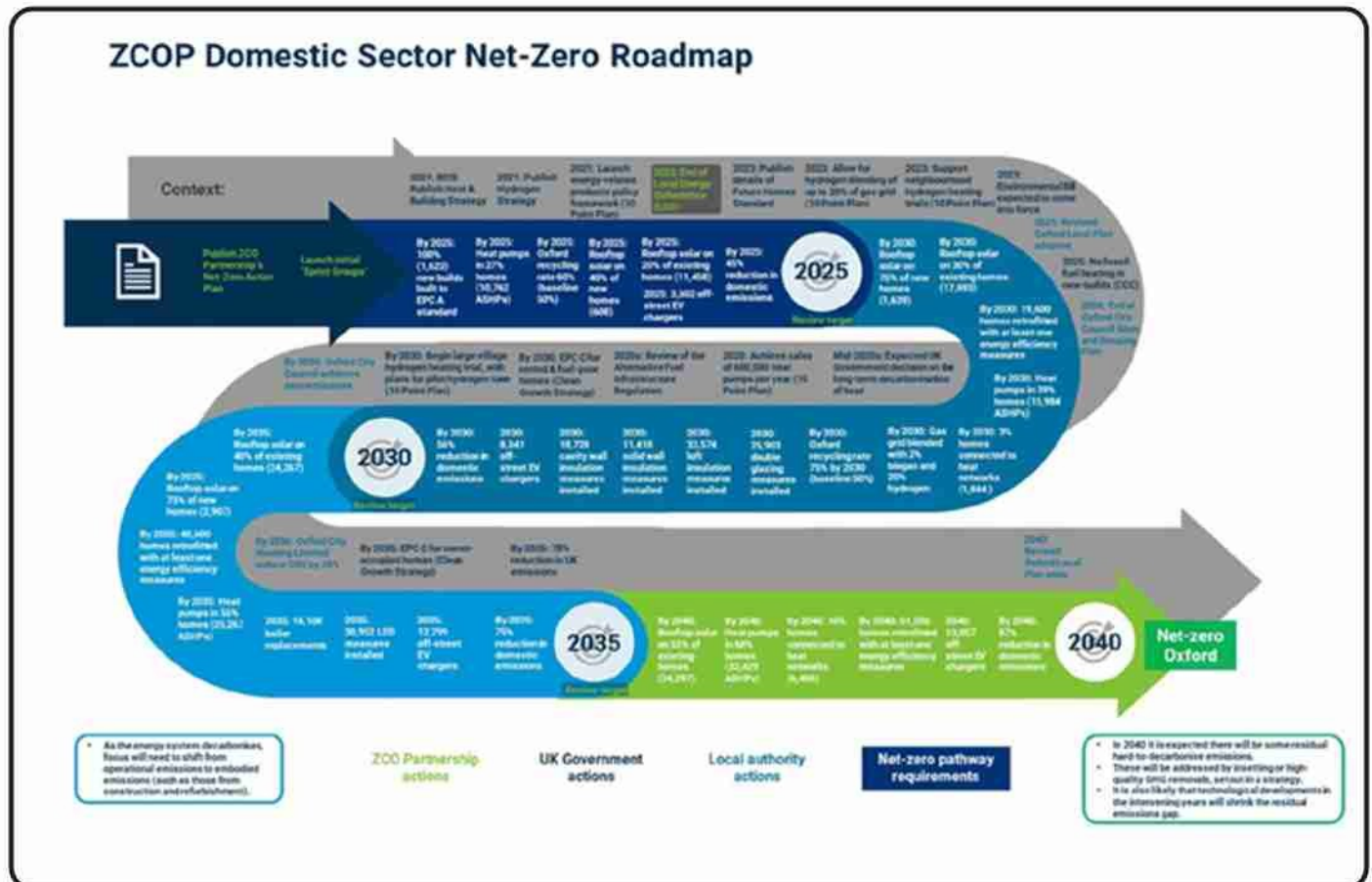
Homes and carbon emissions

The roadmap divides the city's emissions into five sectors that have the most significant impact on the climate, one of these being emissions from domestic buildings. 25% of emissions in Oxford come from residential buildings and the Zero Carbon Oxford Road map sets out that if Oxford city is to reach net zero carbon by 2040, domestic emissions must be reduced by 87%.



2018 Baseline emissions in Oxford by sector (excluding land use). Source: [ZCOP Roadmap](#)

ZCOP Domestic Sector Net-Zero Roadmap



Source: ZCOP Roadmap

Reducing emissions

As the strategic housing authority, the City's biggest landlord, and owning a housing development company, we, as a Council, have a key role to play here. The Council's housing company, OX Place, has committed to deliver a significant number of new homes over the years to come, and built to high energy efficiency standards that mean these new homes will have significantly lower carbon emissions. This includes all homes meeting a 40% carbon reduction from 2021 building regulation standards, alongside delivering ambitious pioneering sites and schemes with even higher standards. We have an aspiration that all new homes built through OX Place will use electricity only and be heated through low-carbon means. The technology advances quickly in this area and we will continue to learn as we go, adapt, and learn from our industry partners. OX Place will engage with **Off-site Manufacture (OSM) Procurement Framework** partners, industry and consultants as an important tool to continue to learn and improve, as well as seeking feedback from people who already live in homes built by OX Place.

Significant investment is needed into the homes we own and rent out in order for these to be more energy efficient and reduce carbon emissions. We are developing an investment and delivery programme, in line with our overall maintenance plans for our domestic buildings, to retrofit and introduce energy efficiency measures. We will also bid for any further central government funding to support this work.

Improving the energy efficiency standards of our homes will not only help move the city towards net zero carbon. It will also bring benefits to our tenants, as energy usage will reduce as a result of these measures being introduced. With the current cost of living crisis, where the cost of fuel is seeing major price increases, this will help overall household finances. Working with our tenants to agree and implement the programme of improvements and energy efficiency measures to their homes will be a key feature of our plans.

Our desire to improve energy efficiency standards for our homes are ambitious, and it is important that we make good progress on this to meet the challenges of the climate emergency. However, the work that needs to be carried out to meet the commitments outlined in this strategy requires significant levels of investment. The Council operates in an increasingly challenging financial position, affecting all providers of social housing, at the same time as we need to invest in our housing stock overall. We are therefore faced with difficult budget choices, and will have to prioritise our investment. Therefore central government will have to step up and support providers of social housing with the necessary funding for us to be able to meet our carbon reduction targets.

Many of the homes in the private rented sector, as well as homes that are owned, also need work to improve energy efficiency if the city is to be net zero by 2040. Introducing such measures can be expensive, and we will therefore actively help landlords and home-owners to access funding that can help pay for these, as well as continue to call for more powers from central government to support our work in raising standards in the private sector.

The Home Improvement Agency can also provide help to people who are elderly, vulnerable or have long-term illnesses and are finding it hard to heat and insulate their homes, as well as providing funding for owner occupiers to help pay for free boiler servicing, the replacement of boilers and repairing heating systems. Funding is available to older, disabled and vulnerable residents from all tenures from the agency for energy efficiency advice and free measures such as insulation, draught proofing, radiator panels, and letterbox/keyhole covers. This helps improve energy efficiency standards for existing homes in the city across all tenures.

Planning proposals for new homes in the city, including our own, will need to demonstrate compliance with planning policies, including those of the Local Plan. The policies of the Local Plan require high environmental standards, including in relation to carbon efficiency.

A key aspect of seeing a reduction in emissions from residential homes in the city is the work we are doing with the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership to trial and test new and innovative retrofit approaches, so that we can share best practice and use methods that work



Priority 4

Preventing homelessness and adopting a rapid rehousing response

By the end of this strategy period, we are seeking to:

- Put the prevention of homelessness at the heart of Council services and partners the Council works with. Work better with partner organisations, such as the County Council, Health and Probation, to improve customer journeys, reduce health inequality, and share information and data, in order to prevent people losing their homes.
- Reduce the number of households being evicted from the private rented sector, by working better with private landlords to help support households to stay in their tenancies, and make it easier for people in need of housing to find a home in the private sector.
- Go beyond our statutory obligations and do more, at an earlier stage, to prevent homelessness and help households stay in their homes.
- Deliver more responsive and dynamic services, which are able to react quickly to changes in patterns of homelessness, so that people who need our help and assistance get quality advice and support when they need it.
- Use data to see, predict and respond to developing trends so that we can have effective and targeted interventions in place.
- Develop a rapid rehousing response, which means that when homelessness cannot be prevented, we rehouse households quickly into an appropriate and permanent home, with support as required.
- Significantly reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation, and the length of time someone has to live in temporary accommodation. Ensure the temporary accommodation we provide is always safe and of a high standard
- Simplify our Allocations Scheme to make sure those in greatest need, for example those who are homeless or living in temporary accommodation can get access to social housing.



How the Council and partners are going to do this

Transform Council services to better prevent and relieve homelessness

Embed a Corporate approach to the prevention of homelessness in Oxford City Council, so every staff member at the Council understands their role to support people to stay in their home, including incorporating homeless prevention work into key strategies such as the Thriving Community Strategy.

Create a **One Gateway** to Council homelessness services to ensure people seeking our assistance find it easier to navigate Council services and get the assistance they need.

Complete a transformation of our Housing Needs team (covering homelessness service and the housing register) to focus more on prevention and rapid rehousing.

Ensure a continuous culture of change and service improvement is embedded into Housing Needs, supported through regular evidence-based reviews.

Develop the Council's online homelessness advice services so more people can access high-quality, tailored advice when they need it, as well as being able to complete homeless applications and apply to be included in the housing register online.

Make better use of Council data to inform the prevention and relief of homelessness.

Focus on tackling homelessness from the private rented sector

Establish a dedicated provision to provide **upstream homelessness prevention** for the private rented sector, which will work with both tenants and landlords, providing mediation and working in close partnership with statutory and support services.

Complete a review of the Council's private rented sector access schemes, developing and implementing changes needed to ensure that the schemes remain effective and attractive to landlords. We will develop and implement changes to ensure our private rented sector schemes remain effective in the context of rising rents and a frozen **local housing allowance**, and create a bespoke service for single adults to help them move into the private rented sector.

Continue to express our support for the abolition of **section 21** notices, and when and if the Government Bill is implemented, we will ensure that the Council supports the new rules, landlord obligations and tenants' rights.

Work in partnership to prevent homelessness

Progress further joint work with health, in order to help prevent delayed discharges from hospitals.

Establish better joint working with mental health, drugs and alcohol services, enabling better housing outcomes for those with health conditions, and reduce health, housing and care inequalities for people with multiple and complex needs.

Improve the Council's joint working arrangements with prisons and probation services, to prevent homelessness for those being released from prison and probation services.

Work to improve support for survivors of domestic abuse and deliver good housing outcomes, by fully conforming to the requirements of the new Domestic Abuse Act, and seeking to gain **Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance** accreditation through a programme of service development.

Work with County Council and providers to help those leaving the Young Persons Supported Accommodation Service secure appropriate accommodation and make necessary changes to policy and processes to support **care leavers**.

Build on the joint work carried out by our partners such as the **Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance**, Crisis Skylight and Advice Centres, creating better customer journeys between Council services and other organisations who support homeless people. Promote a more strategic and coordinated approach across the sector to combat homelessness.

Continue to support and deliver refugee resettlement schemes and rehousing refugees in Oxford ensuring the city is welcoming and a safe place to make a home, reviewing the current schemes' function, and being ready to engage with any future Government schemes.

Reduce evictions from supported housing and housing association accommodation by working in partnership with housing associations and supported accommodation providers to have functioning **pre-eviction protocols** in place, ensuring households in need get help earlier to sustain tenancies.

Adopt a rapid rehousing response to homelessness

Bring together, within the Council structure move-on from temporary and supported accommodation with placements into social and private rented accommodation, to ensure a coordinated approach to rehousing homeless households.

Make changes to current policy and process to support more rapid move-on from temporary and supported accommodation, and provide move-on support into new permanent accommodation when possible.

Review our use of temporary accommodation stock to make sure it is of good quality, that the stock we have is the right amount and matches the need of households, and consider adopting a new temporary accommodation standard.

Complete a review of our allocations scheme and update our allocations policy to ensure that there is more opportunity to prevent homelessness and move people on from temporary and supported accommodation, with particular attention to ensure certain groups of people, such as care leavers, former rough sleepers and those leaving mental health supported accommodation, are supported to access permanent housing.

Work in partnership with other commissioning bodies and registered providers to ensure there are sufficient suitable accommodation options available to meet the need for people moving on from supported accommodation.

New challenges – cost of living crisis

This strategy's evidence base was put together at a time when the country and the city were dealing with the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. This presented some difficulties in trying to analyse and predict how the landscape would change following the pandemic and the end of Government support to local authorities and individuals, as well as ending of measures such as a ban on evictions. As we emerge from the pandemic however, the country has moved straight into a cost of living crisis, driven by high levels of inflation, increasing living costs and in particular a spike in the cost of fuel. This is having a severe impact on household finance.

We are concerned and predict that the immediate and longer-term effects of the cost of living crisis will result in increased pressure on Council services and an increase in levels of homelessness in the city. Our approach to this strategy is therefore one that allows for continued transformation of our services that will allow us to be flexible and responsive to changes in demand, whilst providing excellent services with successful outcomes.

The Council is under significant financial pressure, and whilst demand for our services are likely to increase, there is no further funds available to increase our resources. This makes the transformation outlined in this strategy even more important, as we will meet these significant challenges only through prevention, working in partnership and quickly moving those who are homeless into new housing.

Homelessness in Oxford

Homelessness levels have been high in Oxford for many years, intrinsically linked to structural factors such as high housing costs, significant unaffordability, high levels of deprivation, and changes to the welfare system, which are all major contributors to homelessness in Oxford. Other factors linked to the individual circumstances of people, such as personal crisis, mental health, or physical health, come together to make some households more likely to be affected by homelessness.

In April 2018, the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 was introduced. This legislation brought about the biggest changes to homelessness legislation for over 40 years. It imposed new duties on local authorities and refocused **statutory homelessness** services on prevention of homelessness, with a more person-centred and collaborative approach.

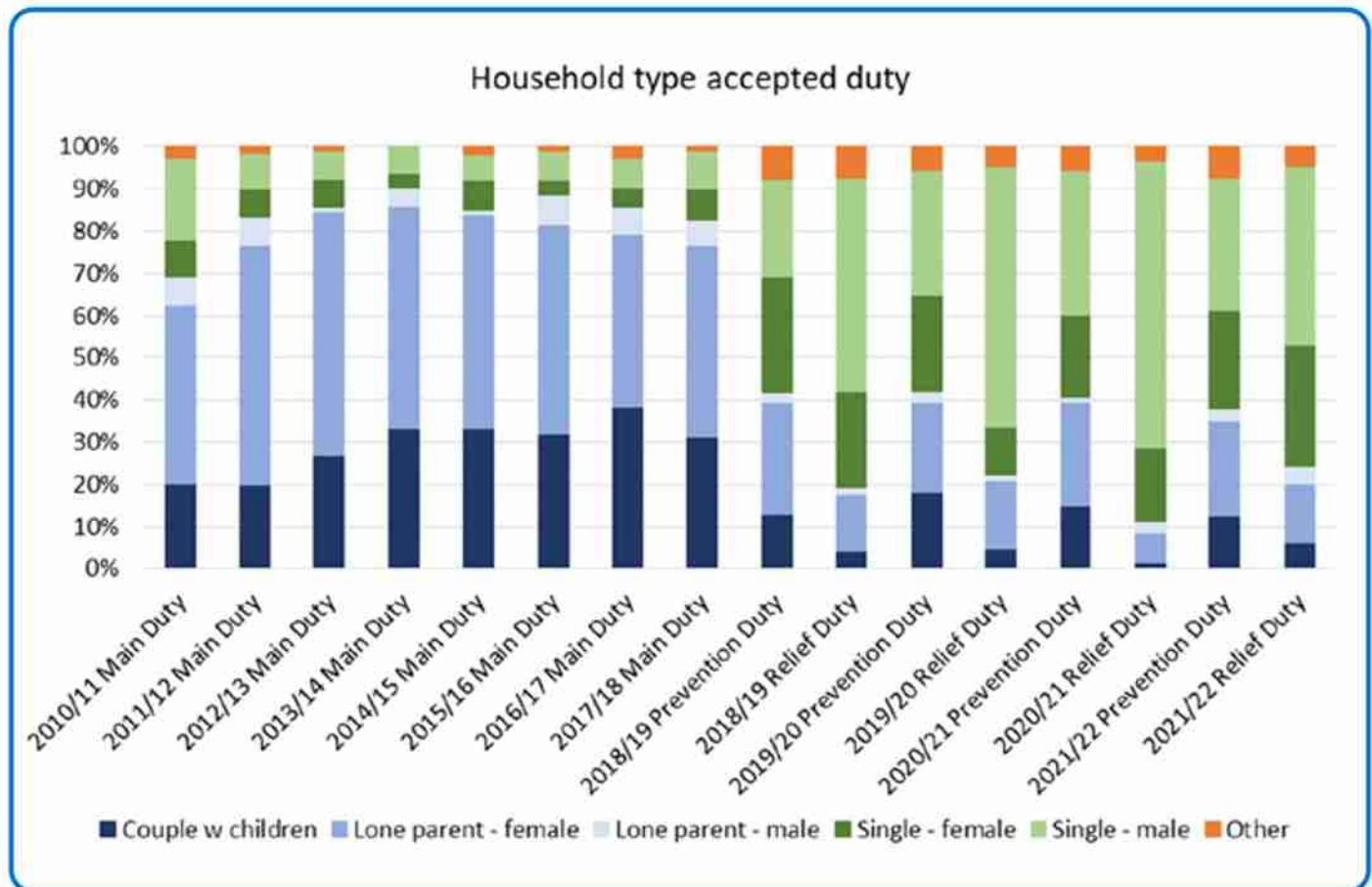
We have successfully implemented the new requirements of the act and have worked hard to prevent homelessness. Since its introduction, we have been working with more households than ever before to prevent and relieve homelessness, with good outcomes.

This enhanced approach, together with significant investment from central government and the Council into homelessness prevention services and services for those experiencing rough sleeping, means that the overall picture of homelessness has generally improved since the last strategy in 2018. However, homelessness levels in the city remain stubbornly high. Therefore, a key focus of this strategy will be to go further to tackle homelessness. There will be more focus on preventative services that kick in earlier, and are more 'upstream', to help people stay in their homes wherever possible. We will also target our services better on the main causes of homelessness in the city. These changes will require continued progress, with significant transformation of the Council's homelessness services.

The ending of a tenancy in the private rented sector is the main reason why people are homeless or threatened with homelessness in Oxford. Yet our services have historically been less focused on the private sector, and there is insufficient support offered to private tenants when they first run into difficulty, with statutory support kicking in too close to an eviction, when it is often too late to save a tenancy. Therefore, this strategy commits the Council, through our services and partnerships, to have an increased focus on homelessness prevention in the private rented sector, and to transform its services to increase support for private tenants, with support services to both help people move within the sector to avoid homelessness, and to stay in their home where possible.

We welcome reform to the private rented sector, such as that being introduced in the Renters' Reform Bill, which will make the sector a more secure housing option for households, in particular by the replacement of 'no fault' evictions (or section 21 evictions) with defined grounds, which has the potential to create a more secure sector. This will mean that landlords will be able to ask households to leave their accommodation only under a limited number of circumstances, such as non-payment of rent, or if the landlord wants to move back into the home, or wish to resell it. Households will therefore be able to stay in their homes for as long as they want and need, and to contribute to the communities they live in. Other measures outlined in the bill include limits on how and when rents can be increased and introducing legally binding standards for private rented accommodation. When introduced, we will work closely with landlords, agents and tenants in the city to support them to introduce the changes that are needed.

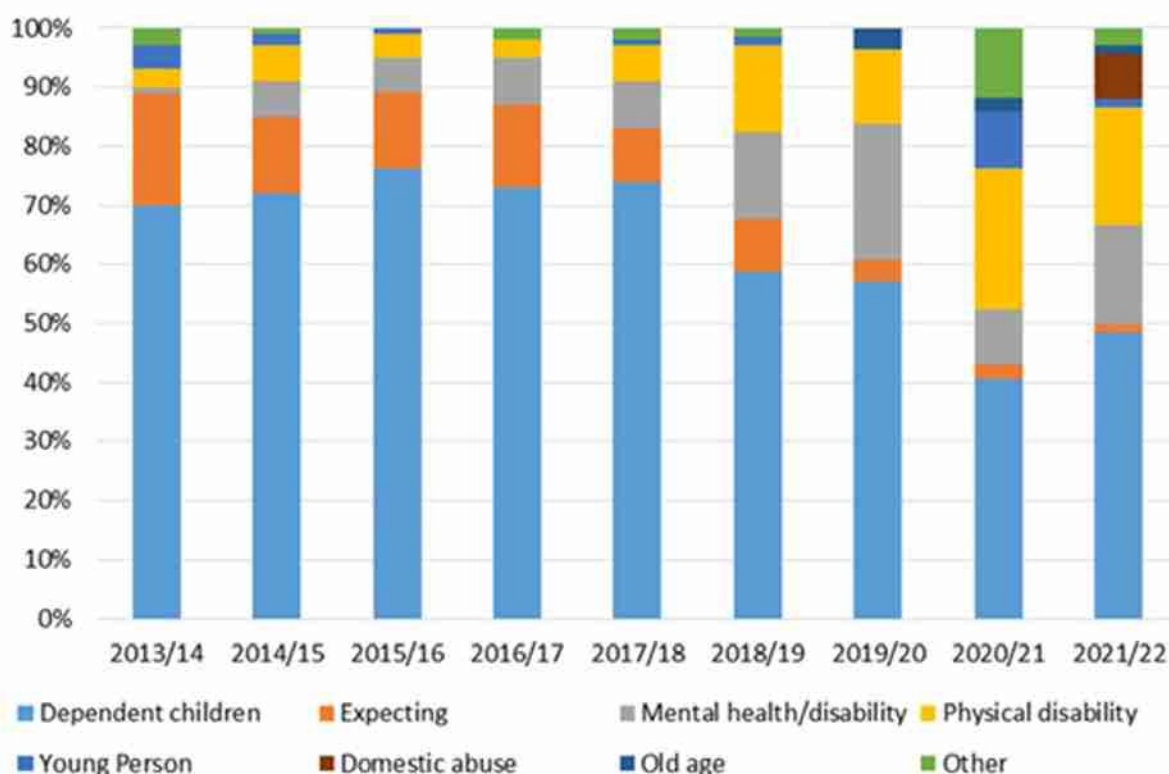
One of the biggest changes we have seen since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act is that we are now assisting more single people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. This was one of the intentions of the new legislation. We will therefore work with partners to ensure that there is a coordinated approach to homelessness prevention for single people, seeking to keep people in their homes or suitable supported accommodation, and to ensure there is a range of accommodation options that single people can move to if homelessness cannot be prevented.



Source: [DLUHC Statistical data set: Live tables on homelessness for relevant periods](#)

A significant proportion of those we owe a **statutory duty** towards have support needs. For those households who are in priority need, and where we owe a main homelessness duty, there has been a marked increase in people who have a physical or mental health disability in the last few years. We are committed to working with partner agencies to find the right support for households, so that their support needs do not contribute to homelessness.

Priority need for households owed Main Duty



Source: MHCLG P1E Homelessness returns (2010/11 to 2017/18) and [DLUHC Statistical data set: Live tables on homelessness for relevant periods](#)

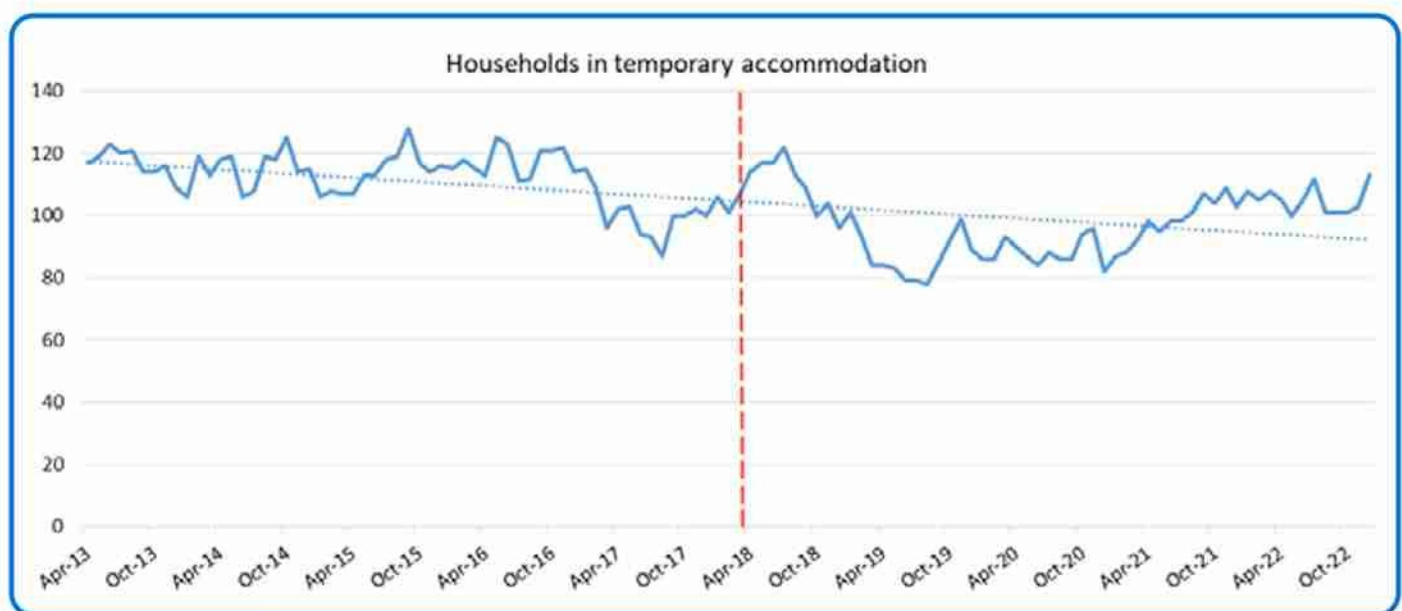
As homelessness is caused by so many different factors, and because people are affected by homelessness in so many different ways, our future services will take a holistic view on prevention, including working with partner agencies such as health, probation and social care to ensure those with support needs can get relevant assistance. An important part of this will be to work with partners to ensure that, in line with our priority of 'Great homes for all', the quality and standard of someone's home does not contribute to homelessness in the city.

Financial difficulties, including debt, which are often driven by high housing costs, are already one of the main issues faced by the households we work with. A high level of households we owe a duty towards are in full-time or part-time work. This changed during the pandemic as a direct effect of a sharp increase in unemployment, but we are now starting to see more people in work seeking help again. This is yet another sign of housing unaffordability in Oxford, as people in work are struggling to afford their rent. The cost of living crisis is likely to make the financial situation of many households worse, and we will therefore incorporate support for this in our holistic view on homelessness prevention, when working with households to relieve homelessness, and when finding alternative homes.

We will improve our services for those who have experienced domestic abuse, through gaining accreditation with the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance. We will also continue to work closely with partners across local charities, County, and District Councils, to support and deliver refugee resettlement schemes. Responding to increased demand in this area, we will review current schemes, developing an enhanced and coordinated response across current and future provision.

Helping people to get a home quickly

We have seen a gradual reduction in the number of households we accommodate in temporary accommodation over the last few years, which is partially due to the focus we have had on homeless prevention. As we continue to develop and enhance our work on prevention, this will in turn mean lower demand on our statutory services, such as temporary accommodation.



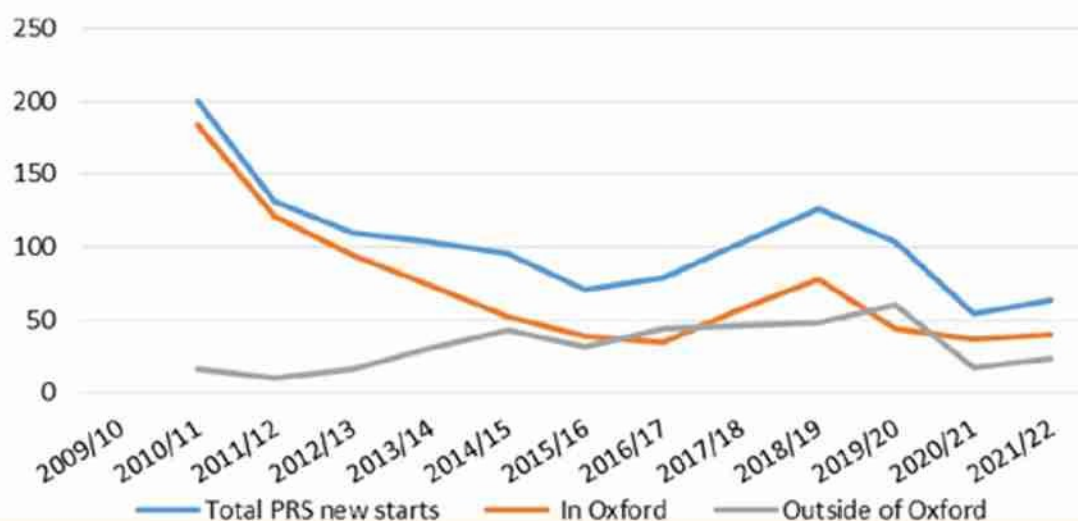
Source and notes: PIE data and OCC internal data collection. Data for the period April 2013 to March 2021 is calculated as per the PIE definition. From April 2021, the number of households in temporary accommodation shows the actual number of households occupying temporary accommodation. The numbers up until March 2021 and the number from April 2021 are therefore not directly comparable. Data from April 2021 does include those who have had a negative decision and where duty has been discharged for example, whilst the PIE definition does not include such households

Although we want to try to prevent people from becoming homeless and having to stay in temporary accommodation wherever possible, this is not always avoidable. Whilst we have seen the number of households in temporary accommodation reduce, people stay in this accommodation much longer than they and we want them to. This is linked to the challenges in finding and securing affordable homes that people can move to.

Therefore, a key objective under this strategy is to develop and implement a rapid rehousing model for the Council's homelessness services. This will aim to keep temporary accommodation stays as short as possible, reducing the impact of homelessness on people and families. New emphasis within our temporary accommodation will be put on how we prepare and work with tenants to become ready to move into permanent housing and make it a success. This will see us putting less emphasis on people being considered 'ready' for a tenancy, and more focus on what support a household would need to make a future tenancy a success.

To enable this rapid rehousing approach, we will renew our approach to access to the private rented sector for homeless households. We already rely heavily on this sector when assisting those we owe a duty towards to find alternative accommodation to move to. We have developed different schemes over the years to be able to help people find accommodation in the private rented sector. Our offer includes financing rent in advance and deposits by providing interest-free loans, or paying rent directly to the landlord. Over the last ten years, it has been getting more difficult for us to assist people into the private rented sector as rents are increasing rapidly.

Number of new tenancies started in Home Choice Schemes (PRS)



Source: OCC internal data

Taking this into account, we recognise that we need to do even more, and develop better prevention tools for those in the sector, as well as to work with landlords in the city to reinvigorate schemes that will be more competitive and continue to allow people to access affordable private rented sector accommodation in the city.

Alongside better access for homeless households into the private sector, we also need to support good access into social housing. We will seek to update our social housing allocations policy and lettings targets, learning from best practice in other authorities, in order to make it easier for people to join the housing register, make sure the scheme supports people who are moving on from interim accommodation, and helps the most vulnerable in our society to access accommodation, including former rough sleepers, care leavers, and those moving on from supported accommodation.



Priority 5

Ending rough sleeping

By the end of this strategy period, we are seeking to:

- Have ended the need for anyone to sleep rough in Oxford
- Ensure that where rough sleeping cannot be prevented, it is brief, rare and non-recurring.
- Establish and embed a new countywide approach to preventing and relieving rough sleeping, with new jointly commissioned arrangements across local government, voluntary sector partners and health and social care in Oxfordshire.
- Work with partners to deliver the right range of preventative services so that the vast majority of people who are facing the need to sleep rough can access support prior to being made homeless.
- Enable a housing-led approach to rough sleeping, rapidly moving people off the street and into a settled home, with more use of flexible support and less use of interim, supported accommodation.
- Improve access to social housing for single households experiencing or at risk of homelessness by changing our approach to how we allocate social housing and by working with housing associations to provide more accommodation.
- Improve access to private rented housing for single adults experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
- Make less use of large, supported, congregate/hostel style and shared accommodation.



How the Council and partners are going to do this

Implement the countywide Oxfordshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Work with and support the Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance and commissioning partners to ensure that service provision and access to accommodation is transformed in line with the countywide strategy, including moving to a housing-led and more person-centred approach.

Aligned with the countywide strategy, together with partners, review commissioning and contract management of supported services ensuring choice and variety is maximised, both in terms of accommodation and support provision.

Work with our District Council colleagues and registered providers to ensure that commitments to the provision of one-bedroom accommodation is met across the county.

Maximise funding resourcing and profile

Continue to work closely with relevant Government departments such as **Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities** to ensure that we have access to future funding opportunities, and have good working relationships so that we can lobby for change if necessary.

Work with commissioners of supported accommodation operating in the city to ensure that as much as possible is provided through registered providers, who are subject to more regulation and impose lower costs on the Council through reduced housing benefit subsidy.

Provide the right service at the right time

Ensure that statutory and non-statutory services in Oxford develop a joint approach to support those experiencing rough sleeping, so people get access to statutory homelessness assistance, **Care Act assessments**, and mental health support.

Continue to deliver services based on the principles of **Somewhere Safe to Stay** in the city to ensure that people do not have to sleep rough before they are offered assistance.

Facilitate access to appropriate health and care services for those who are in need.

Improve access to social housing and range of accommodation options available to single people and couples

Regularly monitor the number of single homeless people offered social housing, as well as the number of single persons who have been excluded from the housing register, to ensure good access and inform service development.

Carry out a full review of the Council's Allocations Policy, including the exclusion criteria based on learnings from case reviews and data in order to ensure that single homeless people are not being discriminated against by being excluded from social housing.

Work with our District Council partners and registered providers to pursue options and solutions for 'hard to let' properties across the county with the view to increasing available stock for single people.

Enhance our private rented sector offer to singles and couples, with no or low support needs, who are looking to move on from supported accommodation or rough sleeping.

Ensure there is sufficient provision of suitable supported accommodation to meet a range of needs

Together with our County and District partners and working towards the goals of the countywide strategy, commission a range of flexible accommodation for singles and couples.

Work with commissioning partners and providers to commission supported accommodation that is distributed and dispersed appropriately throughout the city, to ensure that persons living in supported accommodation feel supported and safe where they live.

Work with services we commission to move to a strength-based approach to delivering housing support services where a person's individual needs are at the centre of the service provision.

Support people experiencing rough sleeping in Oxford who do not have recourse to public funds to find appropriate solutions.

Introduce a housing-led approach to offer of accommodation

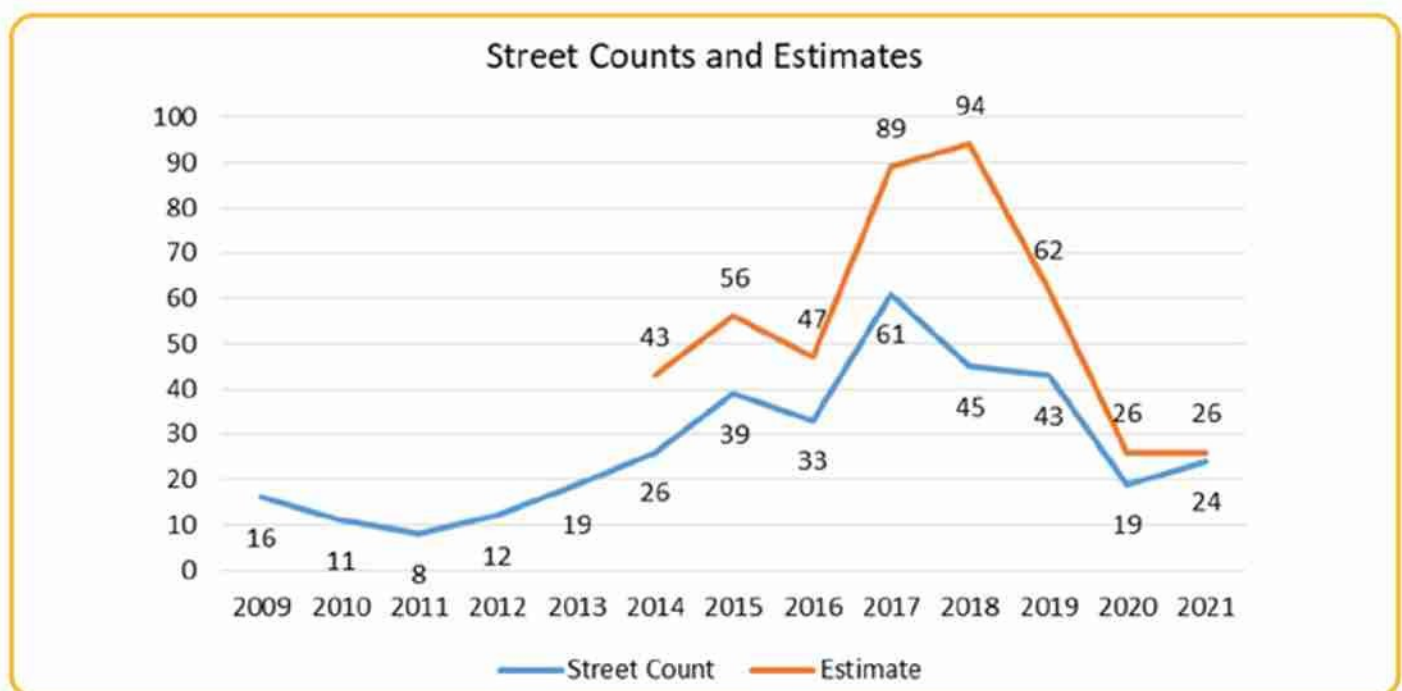
Increase our offer of Housing First accommodation and provide the support individuals may need in order to sustain the accommodation.

Work with the Alliance to continue to transform our approach to the provision of accommodation to single homeless persons, including reviewing our current accommodation offers as we move to a housing-led model and helping facilitate changes agreed as part of this review.

Rough sleeping in Oxford

Oxford City Council and our partners have been working to tackle high levels of rough sleeping and support people off the street into a suitable accommodation. In 2018, the **Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government** (now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) published a Rough Sleeping Strategy and delivery plan, which set out plans to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027. This followed a period of almost ten years in which rough sleeping numbers across the country had increased sharply. The Government launched a new Rough Sleeping Strategy in early September 2022 – '[Ending Rough Sleeping for Good](#)'. The new strategy builds on the achievements of the previous one, and is backed by further funding and investment for the next three years. The strategy recognises that rough sleeping is a complex issue, which is driven by many different factors, and the approach that has been developed under the new strategy is therefore a whole system approach.

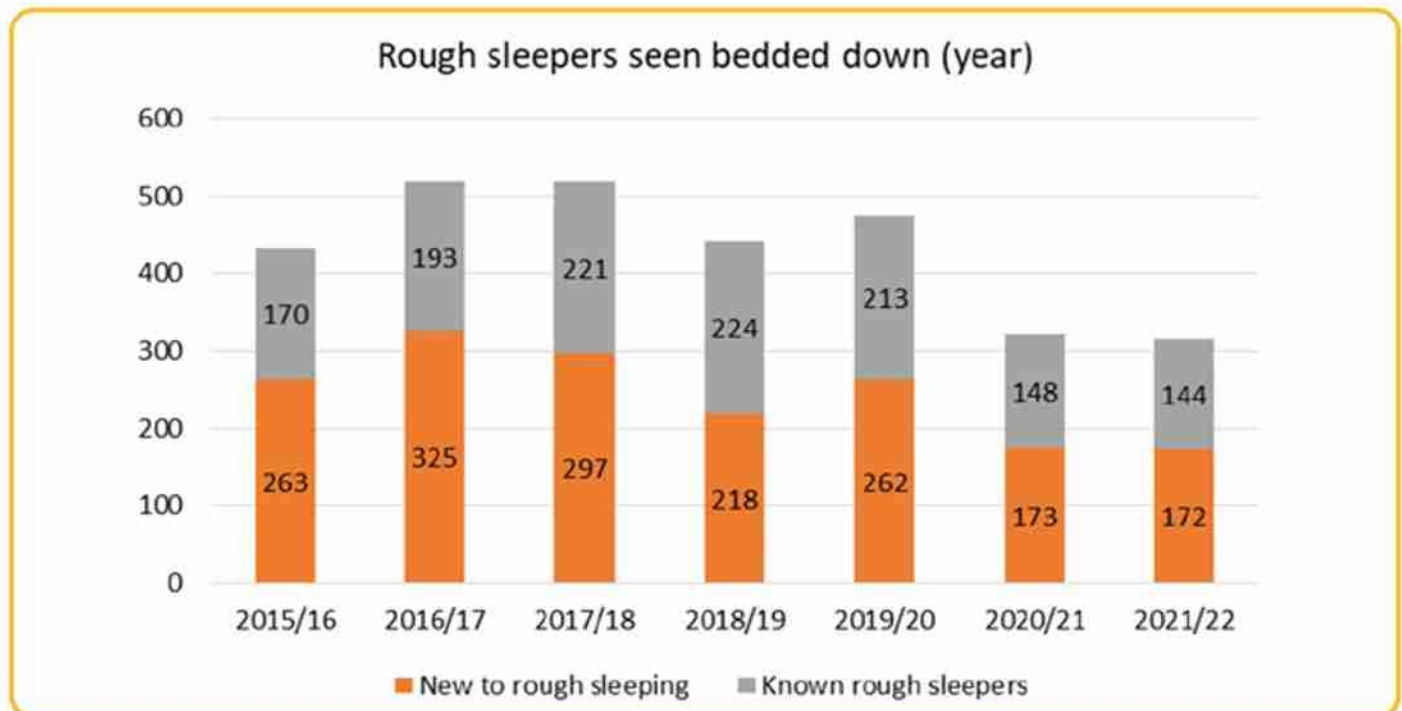
The level of rough sleeping in Oxford increased from eight in 2011 to 61 in 2017 as a result of a range of austerity measures put in place by Government that affected local authorities from 2010 onwards. In Oxford and Oxfordshire, this meant funding cuts for non-statutory services that had been historically funded by the County Council, such as supported accommodation for rough sleepers and single homeless persons.



Source: [Rough Sleeping snapshot in England as published by DLUHC](#)

Along with the national rough sleeping strategy in 2018, the Government also started a large funding programme, which marked a change and a new opportunity to bring people off the street. Since 2018, we as a Council have successfully bid for over £5m in grant funding for services, which has funded additional services for single persons and those who are rough sleeping. As a result, we have seen the number of rough sleepers reduce. At the start of the pandemic, the Government launched the 'Everyone In' mandate, where all local authorities were asked to provide accommodation for all rough sleepers and those accommodated in communal areas to allow people to live in self-contained accommodation during the pandemic. Funding for this was provided to local authorities. Since the end of the 'Everyone In' mandate, rough sleeping numbers have started to increase again across the country, including in Oxford.

The majority of those rough sleeping in Oxford are male. Around 33% are aged between 35 and 44. A large proportion of rough sleepers have support needs – often multiple support needs – which makes them more vulnerable, and this can create barriers to securing accommodation that is suitable, both in terms of the accommodation itself, and also the kind and level of support people may need. As a result of this, we see people who continuously fall out of, or leave the accommodation they have been assisted to move to, and instead return to the street. We are also continuing to see people ending up on the street for the very first time, with about half of those seen rough sleeping every year being new rough sleepers.



Source: Ox THINK

There are regularly people experiencing rough sleeping in Oxford who do not have recourse to public funds. This means that due to their immigration status, they cannot receive benefits such as **Universal Credit** or Housing Benefit, and in most cases they cannot access social housing or supported accommodation. We as a local authority are therefore highly restricted in what we can do to support people who do not have recourse to public funds – for example, we cannot commission accommodation services for persons with no recourse to public funds – and this means that the options for moving off the streets and into accommodation are very limited. However, our commissioned services work with specialist immigration support agencies to support people to regularise their immigration status, in order for them to be able to access public funds. Support is also available to return to a home country if individuals wish to do so. At present, there are also 15 units of accommodation, funded by the **Oxfordshire Homeless Movement**, which people who are rough sleeping and have no recourse to public funds can access.

Despite the restrictions on what we can do to support people who do not have recourse to public funds, as a Council, we are highly committed to the city being a welcoming place to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. As such, the Council have voted for, and have renewed our pledge to become an authority of sanctuary, seeking accreditation from **City of Sanctuary** to become a welcoming organisation across all service areas for people seeking sanctuary in our city.

Preventing rough sleeping

To end the need for people to sleep rough in Oxford, we need to prevent people from ending up on the street in the first place. We need to have enough accommodation available to assist people off the streets, it needs to be the right accommodation, and there need to be services in place to help people stay in their accommodation. Developing a range of different provisions is a central focus going forward, and a central theme of Oxfordshire's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy that was implemented in 2021. This strategy will drive and inform much of the City Council's work.

The countywide strategy is the result of the County, City and Districts Councils, as well as health partners, working together to prevent and tackle rough sleeping. It focusses on collaboration and working across geographical and professional borders to end rough sleeping in the county and to target resources collectively to meet the needs and aspirations of people affected by homelessness and rough sleeping. The strategy will underpin a transformation in the way housing, social care and health services work together and with people in need of housing and support.

New commissioning and new services

One of the biggest shifts in service provision for rough sleepers and single homeless people brought about by the countywide strategy, is the commissioning of a group of different organisations that have come together to form the Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance. This Alliance of organisations is operating as one service that has shared responsibility. It will include an assessment and triage centre in the city that will function as a multi-disciplinary hub and the 'Somewhere Safe to Stay' provision.

The Alliance will implement a significant transformation of services during the life of this strategy, with more personalised services linked to what individuals need in order to move from the street, and adopting a model that supports greater amounts of Housing First accommodation, in which people move to a permanent home but with the right flexible support to make it a success.

Whilst a large proportion of accommodation and other services for single homeless people and rough sleepers are commissioned together with partners, we also have a large commissioning programme that funds additional services that are needed in Oxford to meet the needs in the city. The Council has a large commissioning programme for such services, and funds for this have increased over the last three years, largely due to successfully securing funds from Government schemes. Continuous funding from the Government and other sources is key for us to be able to continue to deliver and develop the range of services that are needed to end rough sleeping in the city.

In addition to working with others to commission and develop more supported accommodation options, we also need to work together to ensure that single persons can move into private rented or social rented accommodation. The Crisis-commissioned housing-led feasibility study for Oxfordshire considered the allocations schemes in place for Districts and the City Council. One example the report references, is the number of allocations that are made to those who are either currently rough sleeping or leaving supported accommodation (such as hostel accommodation). Only 4.5% of allocations go to this group in Oxford, while other local authorities that promote access for this group achieve much higher numbers, such as Hull, which allocates 21.4%, or Coventry at 18.3%. We have carefully considered these findings, which will inform our future approach to allocations for social housing under this strategy.



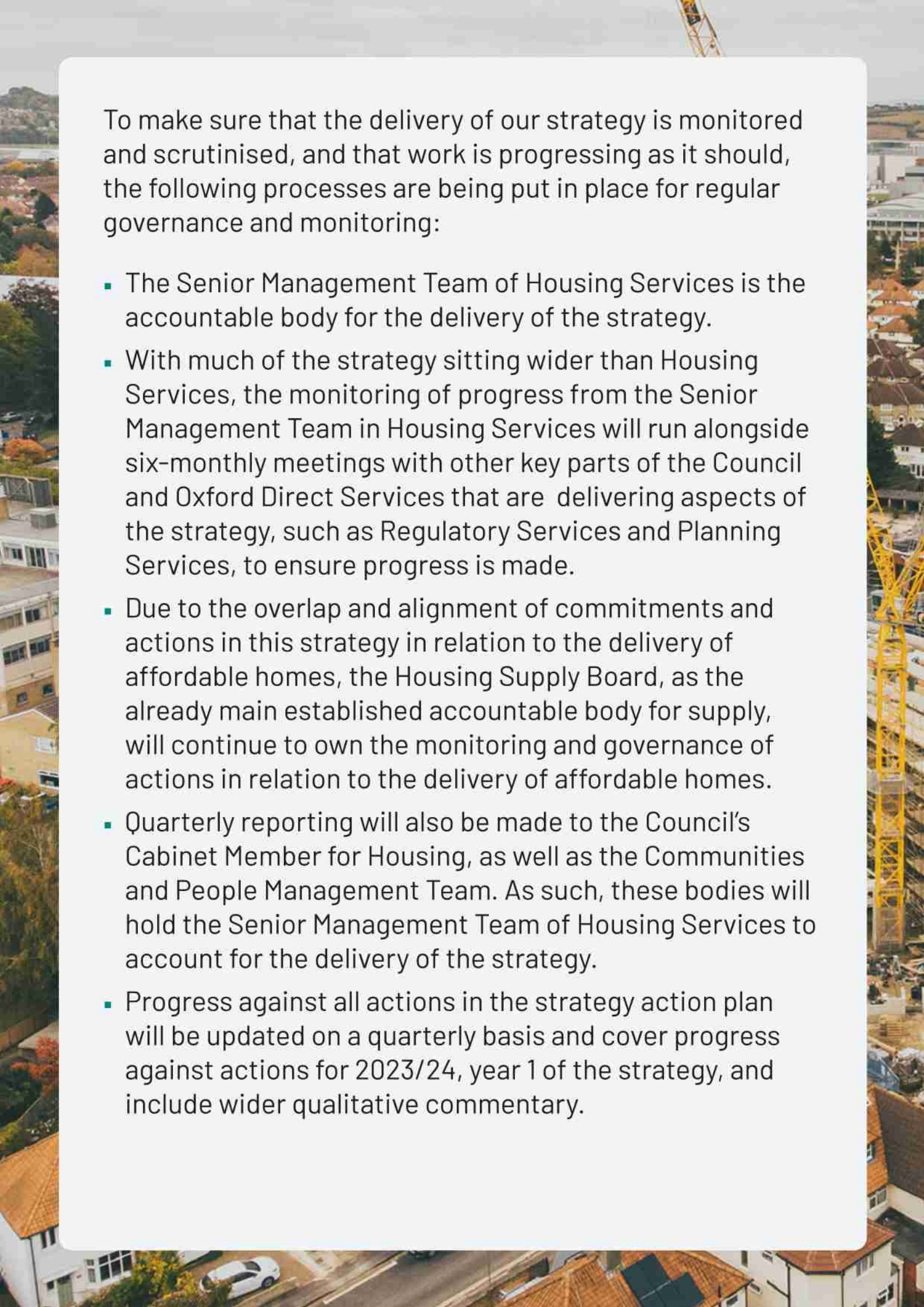
Governance and delivery of the strategy

Our strategy covers a period of five years. It is hard to predict what is going to happen in this time, and undoubtedly, there will be changes to legislation, regulation and wider societal and economic shifts that will have an impact on our communities and what we can and need to do as a Council.

Whilst there will undoubtedly be changes to the context within which we operate and need to deliver this strategy, we do not anticipate that the vision and priorities set out in this document will have to change significantly, as they are long-term and sufficiently flexible that we can adjust them to changing circumstances. We will remain committed to these throughout the strategy period.

To take into account a change in context, challenges and opportunities, and our need to respond and adapt to these, the strategy action plan will be reviewed and updated annually. This will ensure the strategy and its delivery is able to adapt and change depending on the circumstances the city finds itself in, remains relevant, and plays a key role in driving work around housing, homelessness and rough sleeping across the organisation.

Data and evidence underpins our strategy and action plan, and it will continue to do so. To help inform the annual review of the strategy, we will monitor key sets of data throughout the strategy period.

The background of the slide is a photograph of a residential neighborhood. In the foreground, there are houses with orange-tiled roofs and a white car parked on a street. In the background, a tall yellow construction crane is visible against a clear sky. The overall scene is a mix of established housing and ongoing development.

To make sure that the delivery of our strategy is monitored and scrutinised, and that work is progressing as it should, the following processes are being put in place for regular governance and monitoring:

- The Senior Management Team of Housing Services is the accountable body for the delivery of the strategy.
- With much of the strategy sitting wider than Housing Services, the monitoring of progress from the Senior Management Team in Housing Services will run alongside six-monthly meetings with other key parts of the Council and Oxford Direct Services that are delivering aspects of the strategy, such as Regulatory Services and Planning Services, to ensure progress is made.
- Due to the overlap and alignment of commitments and actions in this strategy in relation to the delivery of affordable homes, the Housing Supply Board, as the already main established accountable body for supply, will continue to own the monitoring and governance of actions in relation to the delivery of affordable homes.
- Quarterly reporting will also be made to the Council's Cabinet Member for Housing, as well as the Communities and People Management Team. As such, these bodies will hold the Senior Management Team of Housing Services to account for the delivery of the strategy.
- Progress against all actions in the strategy action plan will be updated on a quarterly basis and cover progress against actions for 2023/24, year 1 of the strategy, and include wider qualitative commentary.

As mentioned above, an important part in allowing the strategy to adapt to changing circumstances is an annual review and refresh of the strategy action plan. The review will be carried out using a range of relevant information including:

- Quarterly progress updates prepared as part of the general governance and monitoring structure (detailed above).
- Analysis of key data sets, such as homelessness data, the housing market, housing supply figures and more.
- Analysis of Corporate and Service key performance indicators (KPIs) that are directly related to this strategy.

A full monitoring and update report, and recommendations for revisions to the action plan, will be presented annually to the Council's Cabinet for approval. The annual report presented to the Cabinet, will also be available to the Council's Scrutiny Committee and sub-committees, to consider and provide feedback in line with the Council's constitution.

Following guidance and the approval of any changes made to the action plan, it will be implemented and published at the start of each financial year throughout the duration of this strategy.



Glossary

This glossary is intended to help readers of this strategy gain a good understanding of some of the terms used. It is not intended to give the precise legal definition of terms or words used.

Affordable housing – housing that is available to households who would otherwise not house themselves, for example because they would struggle to afford the cost of housing in the open market (to buy or to rent). Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. There are different types of affordable housing:

- **Social rented housing** is owned by local authorities and private registered providers, for which guideline target rents are determined through a national rent regime. Rent levels are generally set much lower than those charged on the open market.
- **Affordable rented housing** is owned by local authorities and private registered providers of social housing and let to households who are eligible for social rented housing. **Affordable Rent** is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).
- **Shared Ownership** is where a share of a dwelling is sold (between 25% and 75%) and the buyer pays rent on the remaining share.

Allocations Policy and **Allocations Scheme** – the Allocation Scheme is the policy the Council uses to assess housing need and prioritise customers on the housing register for offers of social housing in Oxford. Every local housing authority must have an allocation scheme in place that determines housing priorities, as well as a procedure to be followed when allocating social housing.

Asset Management Strategy – for a local authority, an asset management strategy sets out how the authority will manage and invest in its property portfolio.

Average (also 'Mean' in mathematical terms) – the result you get by adding two or more amounts together and then dividing the total by the number of amounts i.e. the average of three numbers 9, 12 and 21 is 14 ($9+12+21 = 42$, divided by $3 = 14$).

Carbon impact – the effect on the environment that carbon emissions have.

Care Act Assessment – an assessment carried out by a local authority that determines what kind of care needs a person has. The outcome of the assessment may then help determine what support can and should be put in place for the person in question.

Care Leaver – a person aged 25 or under, who has been looked after by a local authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14; and who was looked after by the local authority at school-leaving age or after that date.

City of Sanctuary – a nationwide movement that seeks to make the UK welcoming for people forced to flee their homes in other parts of the world. [City of Sanctuary UK](#) coordinate, supports and grows the network, and work across the country and across every sector to encourage inclusivity, solidarity and compassion for people from a forced displacement background.

Climate change – refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns across our planet. Human activities has been a main driver of climate change over the last 200 years, primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas. This has caused temperatures to increase – which is also referred to as global warming – which in turn has resulted in effects such as wildfire, flooding and droughts.

Climate emergency – a climate emergency is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as “a situation in which urgent action is required to reduce or halt climate change and avoid potentially irreversible environmental damage resulting from it”.

Community-led housing – housing that is designed and managed by local people and built to meet the needs of the community, not for private profit. Community-led housing is a way for local communities to provide their own decent and affordable homes. It is often designed to help certain groups – for example young people, older people, or those in need of affordable family homes.

Complex needs – when someone has multiple support needs, and in the context of this strategy, when these needs each present a challenge in accessing mainstream accommodation.

Congregate style accommodation – a type of housing, such as hostel style accommodation, in which individuals have a private bedroom, but share a dining room, recreational room or other facilities such as a kitchen, with other residents.

Decarbonisation – refers to all measures that reduce the amount of carbon that an organisation/ business/sector/entity uses. For example, it is normally applied to the electricity grid’s move to more renewable energy, which reduces the amount of carbon each unit of electricity contains.

Decent Homes Standard – a national standard set by Government that determines a minimum standard that social homes (such as council and housing association homes) need to meet. It ensures housing is of a certain quality.

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) – from winter 2018, this is the name of the Government department that is responsible for housing, communities, local government in England and the levelling up policy. DLUHC was formerly the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) – a national partnership between three agencies with the mission to improve the housing sector’s response to domestic abuse, through the introduction and adoption of an established set of standards. The agencies (Standing Together, Peabody and Gentoo) have established forty standards across eight priority areas, which are underpinned by a set of values and principles supported by an accreditation framework.

Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO) – a legal device that aims to assist local authorities to bring unoccupied properties back into use. It means that if the local authority is granted an EDMO, the local authority would take over the management of the property. This tool is seen as a last resort to bring a property back into residential use.

Energy Quality Assurance service – specialist independent checking, training and testing throughout the full design and construction phases of development.

Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) – a tool that gives a property an energy efficiency rating. The rating goes from A (which is the most energy efficient) to G (which is the least energy efficient).

Fabric first – creating an airtight, insulated building that reduces the amount of energy required to heat the home.

First Homes – a specific kind of discounted market sale housing that meets the definition of affordable housing for planning purposes.

Future Oxfordshire Partnership – previously known as the Oxfordshire Growth Board, the Future Oxfordshire Partnership is a joint committee of the six councils of Oxfordshire, working together with strategic partners to deliver a better future for the county. The partnership deliver the aims of the Strategic Vision, which includes: coordinating local efforts to manage economic, housing and infrastructure development; supports the development of local planning policy that meets the Government's aim of net zero carbon by 2050. The cooperation has helped Oxfordshire secure over £500m of additional investment, such as through the City Deal, Housing and Growth Deal, Housing Infrastructure Fund and the Oxfordshire Rail Connectivity Study.

Heat pumps – A heat pump captures heat from outside and moves it into your home. It uses electricity to do this, but the heat energy delivered to your home is much more than the electrical energy used to power the system.

Home Improvement Agency (HIA) – provides a dedicated service to help older, disabled and vulnerable residents within Oxford City to live safely and independently in their own home by undertaking repairs, maintenance and adaptations.

Homes England – this is the Government's housing, land and regeneration agency for England. Up until 2018, Homes England was known as the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).

Homes for Ukraine – Government-approved grant funded scheme to allow Ukrainian refugees with no family links to the UK to be sponsored by individuals or organisations who can offer them a home.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) – a house in multiple occupation is a property rented by three or more unrelated people in two or more separate households who share facilities like a bathroom and kitchen.

Housing-led – a housing-led approach means that homelessness is resolved by offering people their own, secure home as quickly as possible. A housing-led approach is key to successful homelessness prevention as support and advice is provided so that people can stay in, and maintain, their own home for the long term.

Housing association (HA) – a private, non-profit organisation that provides low cost housing. Housing Associates offer similar types of accommodation as local authorities, and in Oxford for example, many of the housing association properties are allocated to households via the housing register.

Housing First – Housing First is an approach that offers permanent, affordable housing as quickly as possible for individuals and families experiencing homelessness, and then provides the supportive services and connections to the community-based support people need to keep their housing and avoid returning to homelessness.

Housing Revenue Account – a ring-fenced account for budgets relating to Council landlord services. The remainder of Council budgets are referred to as the General Fund.

Housing register – also known as the Oxford Register for Affordable Housing (ORAH). This consists of three separate housing lists: the General Register List, the Transfer List and the Homeless List. Instead of the Council and registered providers of social housing keeping their own different housing registers, applicants can join a single housing list within Oxford City (ORAH). Social housing in the city owned by the Council and its partner registered providers, is let through the Oxford Register for Affordable Housing. It is administered by Oxford City Council and managed by Oxford City Council and its partners.

Index of Multiple Deprivation – a measure that is used within the UK to measure relative deprivation of a small area. It measures seven different components: income, employment, education, skills and training, health and disability, crime, barriers to housing and services, and the living environment. The measure is often used to describe the relative deprivation of an area by stating if that area falls within the most deprived 10%, 20% or 30% in the country.

Lived Experience Advisory Forum (LEAF) – a group comprising people who have experienced homelessness and/or related issues or have experience of accessing homeless services. In Oxfordshire, this forum plays an important role in ensuring the voice of people with lived experience is included in commissioning, policy change and decision making.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) – local housing allowance is a way of working out how much housing benefit a person can get to help pay their rent to a private landlord. It is based on the lower end of market rent. The rates are set for Broad Rental Market areas – the Oxford Broad Rental market area includes Charlbury down to Didcot and Witney to Wallingford. The LHA rate will depend on how many bedrooms are needed to accommodate the household, not the amount of the rent.

Local Plan – local plans set out the vision and framework for future development of the local area and all local authorities have one. They address needs and opportunities in relation to the economy, housing, community facilities and infrastructure as well as provide a basis for safeguarding the environment, adapting to climate change and securing good design.

Median – the middle number within a range of numbers set out in numerical order, i.e. 11, 21, 39, 40, 59, the median would be 39. Using a median figure helps to reduce the impact of extremely high or low numbers when representing a value. It is the middle value.

Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) – this national standard was introduced in 2015 and sets a minimum energy efficiency level for domestic private rented accommodation.

Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) – up until winter 2018, this was the name of the department responsible for housing, communities and local government. It was replaced by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in winter 2018.

National Standards – the national standards that are referred to on page 24, of which Building Regulations Part L, which lay out the minimum standard for all new homes to meet for energy, carbon and power. New standards came into force in June 2022, which is why OX Place has to work to two different standards.

Net zero carbon – also referred to as carbon neutrality, when the amount of greenhouse gases produced/emitted is no more than the amount of greenhouse gases produced/emitted that are eliminated. For example, a building would reach net zero carbon when the amount of greenhouse gas it produces is no more than the amount taken away by various means, such as using renewable energy sources (e.g. wind, sun) to generate electricity.

Off-site Manufacture (OSM) – type of build where some or all of the work takes place off-site – e.g. parts of a house are constructed in a factory and then transported to the site where the house is to be located, rather than the house being built fully at the location.

Off-site Manufacture (OSM) Procurement Framework – a framework that sets out the procurement conditions for building/construction companies that work with OX Place to develop homes. OX Place set this up as a sustainable framework that requires suppliers to be able to meet low carbon build standards including Passive House and Net Zero Carbon. (Procurement = buying of goods or services.)

One Gateway – a simplified or common entry point to homelessness prevention services, allowing triage to be completed and tailored support provided for anyone ahead of the 56 days statutory duty including the provision of advice.

Oxford Direct Services (ODS) – a company owned by Oxford City Council that provides services on behalf of the Council (such as property repairs and refuse collection).

Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance – a group of six organisations that have been commissioned to deliver homelessness services across Oxfordshire (A2 Dominion, Aspire, Connections Support, Elmore, Homeless Oxfordshire, St Mungo's).

Oxfordshire Homelessness Movement – partnership of organisations across Oxfordshire working together to ensure that no-one has to sleep rough on the streets of Oxfordshire and to help those experiencing homelessness.

Passive house – a highly energy efficient building that require little energy to heat in order to have comfortable indoor temperatures. Passive House standards set out the requirements that a building needs to meet for a certain quality, comfort and energy efficiency.

Performance gap – a disparity between the energy consumption predicted in the design stage of a building and the energy use in actual operation.

Pre-eviction protocol – a process for managing situations which may lead to an eviction. This would involve a number of different organisations trying to resolve the situation and prevent a person or a household from being evicted from their accommodation and therefore become homeless.

Rapid rehousing – assist someone to move to more secure and permanent accommodation as soon as possible if they are facing homelessness or live in temporary accommodation, and the provision of support for those who may need it in order to sustain the accommodation longer term.

Registered provider (RP) – a registered provider is an organisation/company/entity that owns social housing and that is included on a statutory register held by the **Regulator of Social Housing** (see below). Registered providers include local authority landlords and private registered providers such as housing associations. See also: housing association.

Regulated operational energy – regulated energy is building energy consumption resulting from the specification of controlled, fixed building services and fittings, including space heating and cooling, hot water, ventilation, fans, pumps and lighting. Such energy uses are inherent in the design of a building.

Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) – a non-departmental public body that regulates registered providers of social housing. This includes economic regulation focusing on governance, financial viability and value for money. The regulator also set consumer standards and may take action if these standards are breached.

Resettlement scheme – Government-approved grant funded scheme to assist refugee families to resettle within a district across England.

Section 21 notice – a section of the Housing Act 1988 which means that a landlord has to give notice to start the process to regain possession of the property. Under this section, a notice can be given to repossess properties without landlords having to establish fault on part of the tenant. Section 21 notices are therefore sometimes also called no-fault evictions. In 2019, the Government carried out a national consultation proposing the abolition of section 21 of the Housing Act 1988, in order to provide more security for people renting their home in the private rented sector.

Selective licensing scheme – the term comes from the Housing Act 2004, which allows the Council to require any private rented homes within a specified area to have a licence (unless it falls under mandatory or additional HMO licensing). The Housing Act 2004 allows the Council to select all, or parts, of their area subject to these licensing controls. It refers to the selection of the area, as opposed to the people who have to apply or the properties covered.

Solar photovoltaic (PV) panels – solar panels that use sunlight as a source of energy to generate electricity. They can be used to create electricity for use in the home or communal areas of flats, and can be placed on roofs of houses and other buildings for example.

Somewhere Safe to Stay – short term accommodation for people who have recently started rough sleeping, or provided in order to prevent the need to rough sleep. Support is provided intensively to find a solution to the individual's homelessness.

Statutory (homelessness) duty – when a local authority has a statutory duty, this means that they have an obligation under legislation to do something. Since the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 was introduced in England in April 2018, local housing authorities (councils) have a statutory duty to work with a household to prevent homelessness where the household is threatened with homelessness within 56 days (this is called Prevention Duty), and to work with households to find suitable accommodation where the household is already homeless (this is called Relief Duty). If a household is still homeless when the relief duty comes to an end, the Council must decide if a 'main homelessness duty' is owed, that is, if they fall within a specified priority need group and are not intentionally homeless. When a household is assessed as being owed a main duty, the Council must provide accommodation. These duties apply only if a household is eligible. This depends on their immigration status. Under the Homelessness Reduction Act, local authorities also have a duty to provide advice and assistance to anyone approaching the local authority for help and where a prevention or relief duty is not owed.

Stock condition survey – a detailed internal and external inspection of a house that helps the Council plan maintenance and improvement work that may need to be carried out.

Temporary accommodation – under certain circumstances the Council has a legal obligation to provide temporary accommodation to homeless applicants, if required.

Tenancy Strategy – a plan that sets out how the social housing in an area is let and how long tenancies should be granted for.

Tenure type – refers to the way in which someone is occupying a property, for example as an owner of the property, renting a property, or owning part of a property (e.g. shared ownership).

Transactional survey – a tool that collects feedback from people that interact and receive a service from an organisation. A transactional survey captures feedback shortly after a specific interaction. Such surveys can give a very good insight into how satisfied people are with the services, guidance and advice they receive.

Universal Credit (UC) – a benefit that brings together a range of benefits into one payment. It was first introduced in 2013 and since then has been introduced gradually. Universal Credit replaces a range of benefits such as Jobseekers Allowance, Housing Benefit, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Employment and Support Allowance, and Income Support.

Upstream homelessness prevention – refers to preventing a household from becoming threatened with homelessness before a local authority has to accept a Prevention Duty (where a household is threatened with homelessness within 56 days).

White paper – a policy document produced by the Government that sets out their proposals for future legislation.

Youth Ambition – an incentive run by Oxford City Council that engages with young people in positive youth work activities to help them to broaden their knowledge, skills and capabilities.

Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership – a partnership that brings together universities, hospitals, councils, large businesses, and communities to support the city in its journey to net zero carbon emissions. Those who have signed the Zero Carbon Oxford charter have committed to working together to create a net zero Oxford by 2040 and to collaborate to build a prosperous, sustainable city that we all can share.



Published April 2023