Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Draft Strategy Consultation 2023

Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

Research and Engagement Team

PORTSMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Draft Strategy Consultation

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1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive summary of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy consultation. This consultation gave respondents the opportunity to provide feedback on the strategy document.

2.0 Background

Local authorities are required to carry out a review of homelessness in their area to formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the review. The Portsmouth City Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Partnership Group have worked together to carry out such a review and to develop an ambitious strategy which calls on a partnership approach to preventing homelessness and ending rough sleeping in Portsmouth. At this last stage of consultation, Portsmouth City Council wanted to gather feedback on the strategy document to shape the way they work with homeless people and those who are at risk of becoming homeless in the city for years to come.

3.0 Research

3.1 Objectives

- Assess levels of agreement with the five draft strategic aims
- Assess levels of agreement with the recommended areas of focus beneath each aim
- Understand disagreement with any of the aims or areas of focus
- Explore any elements considered missing from the draft strategy

3.2 Methodology and response rates

In order to meet the research objectives, a predominantly quantitative online survey was proposed. It was designed around the four key research objectives outlined in section 3.1. The survey was launched on 25 October 2023 and was open for four weeks in line with statutory requirements. It was promoted through targeted marketing and communications channels.

In total, the survey received 76 responses.

4.0 Summary of findings

A summary of the analysis undertaken on the data collected from the consultation survey is provided in the following section.

- 16% of respondents have either experienced or been threatened with homelessness, whilst 47% are responding on behalf of a partner organisation; 37% have never experienced homelessness.
- Overall, the vast majority of respondents agree with the five strategic aims (95%) and each of the suggested areas of focus laid out beneath each one (all over 90%). Aim 3 ('provide the right housing to relieve homelessness') is the only overall aim any respondents disagree with.
- Respondents highlight two issues not covered in the strategic aims: overcrowding for council tenants and issues relating to ways of working within the system.
- Just one respondent disagrees with the areas of focus for Aim 1 (prevent homelessness). This is due to the feeling that an intervention into the private rental sector to reduce rents and avoid unfair evictions is the only way to prevent homelessness. Other comments for Aim 1 suggest working with partner agencies, focusing on specific groups, reviewing accommodation provision, and looking at the need for more resources or staff to deliver this aim.
- No respondents disagree with the areas of focus for Aim 2 (end rough sleeping). Further comments include ensuring that accommodation is needs-specific, encouraging the council to be more proactive in this area, and reviewing accommodation provision.
- Just 2% of respondents disagree with the areas of focus for Aim 3 (provide the right housing to relieve homelessness), feeling that increasing the supply of good quality, affordable accommodation will negatively impact surrounding areas. Further comments on this aim also note that housing must be assessed and offered on a case-by-case basis and be needs-specific. Other comments also suggest that the council should be more involved in private sector renting.
- 6% of respondents disagree with the areas of focus for Aim 4 (provide the right support), largely due to concerns about the council's ability to effectively reduce the number of evictions whilst reviewing safeguarding policies, feeling that the two areas of focus may be contradictory. One respondent also suggests that the council should be working with landlords to achieve this aim. Other comments largely centre around ensuring there is a holistic approach to provide suitable housing, concerns about resources to provide specialist assessments, and ensuring frontline staff are sufficiently trained in the intersectional impacts of mental health and homelessness.
- No respondents disagree with the areas of focus for Aim 5 (strengthen collaborative working). Other comments suggest partnership relationships with the council should be integrated and collaborative, with open forums and dialogues to approach complex situations and enable joint learning.
- Further comments on the strategy express support for the document, suggestions to reassess what type of help is on offer for applicants, comments on the comprehensiveness of assessments and the thoughtful and purposeful provision of accommodation, as well as uncertainty about the council's ability to deliver on this strategy due to funding, capacity, and resources.

5.0 Analysis of results

This report presents the findings from the analysis undertaken on the 2023 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy consultation, divided into the following eight sections:

1. Respondent demographic profile
2. The strategic aims
3. Aim 1: Prevent homelessness
4. Aim 2: End rough sleeping
5. Aim 3: Provide the right housing to relieve homelessness
6. Aim 4: Provide the right support
7. Aim 5: Strengthen collaborative working
8. Further comments

5.1 Respondent demographic profile

The first section of analysis details the demographics of the respondents that took part in the consultation. Information was collected about the position from which respondents are responding to the survey, as well as their age, sex, ethnic group, disability, and disability type. Base sizes vary as questions in the demographic section included a 'prefer not to say' option.

Figure 1 shows that just under half of respondents work in or are part of a partner organisation (47%) and 37% have never experienced homelessness. The remaining 16% of respondents have some experience of homelessness, either having been homeless or having been threatened with homelessness.

Figure 1: Which best describes the position from which you are responding to this survey?
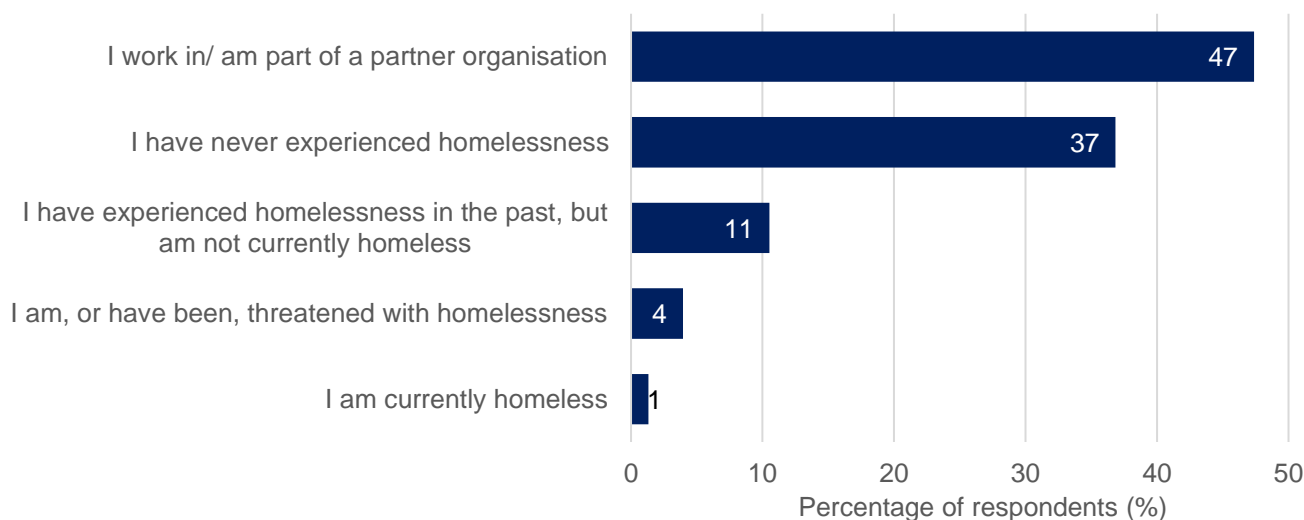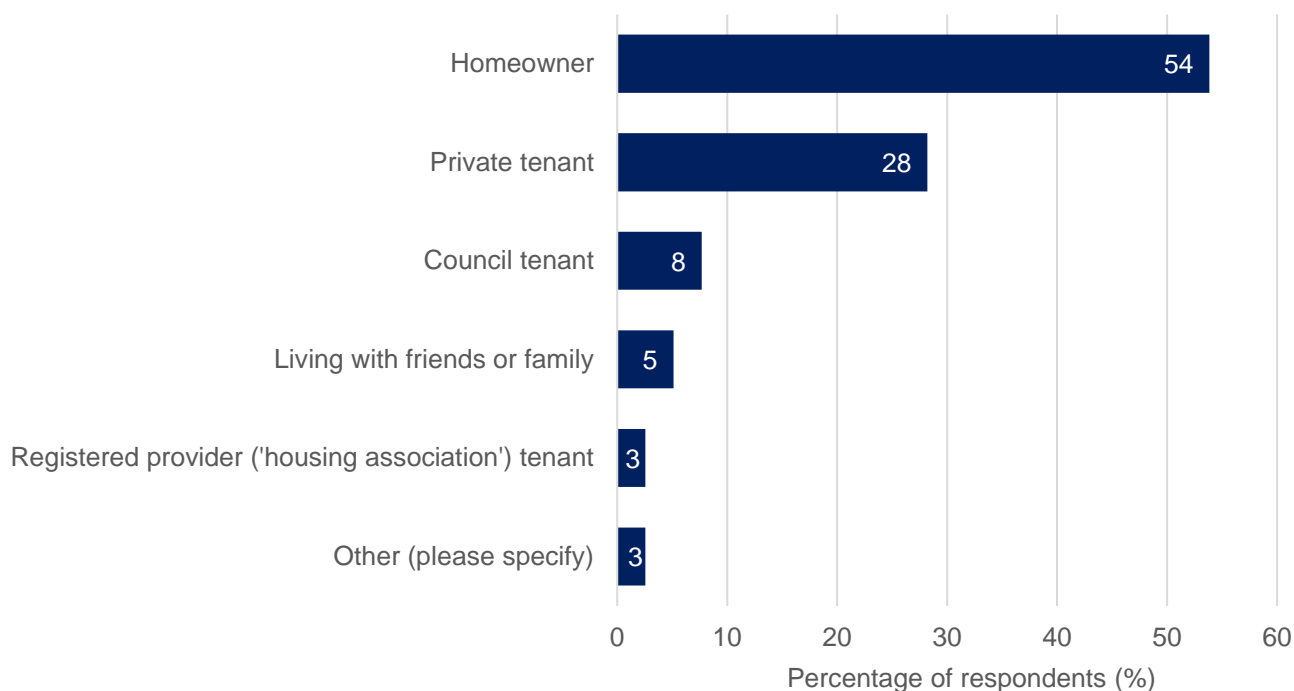

Base: Total sample (76)

Figure 2 on the following page shows the living situation of those respondents who are not currently homeless or part of a partner organisation. Over half are homeowners (54%), whilst 28% are private tenants, and 8% are council tenants.

Figure 2: Which of the following best describes your current housing situation?

Base: Those who are <u>not</u> currently homeless or are <u>not</u> responding on behalf of a partner organisation (39)

Table 1 shows the partner organisations responding to the consultation.

*Table 1: What is the name of the partner organisation you are responding on behalf of?*

Name of partner organisation	Percentage of respondents (%)
Portsmouth City Council (including responses from HNAS, Public Health, area housing office, Community Safety)	41
Society of St James	15
Solent NHS	6
Two Saints	3
DWP	3
Intuitive Thinking Skills	3
ICB-Portsmouth	3
EC Roberts Centre	3
Adult MASH	3
Gosport Borough Council	3
The Moving on Project Portsmouth	3
Hyde Housing Association Limited	3
Portsmouth City of Sanctuary	3
Vivid Housing Association	3
Helping Hands	3
Portsmouth Safeguarding Adults Board	3

Base: Respondents who work in or are part of a partner organisation (34)

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Figure 3 shows respondents by age. The majority of respondents are aged between 35 and 64 (78%), whilst 14% are aged under 35.
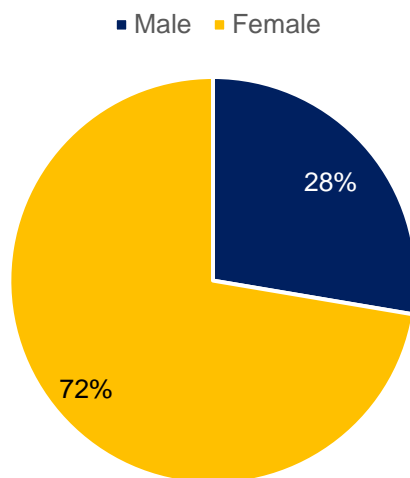
Figure 3: What is your age group?

Percentage of respondents (%)
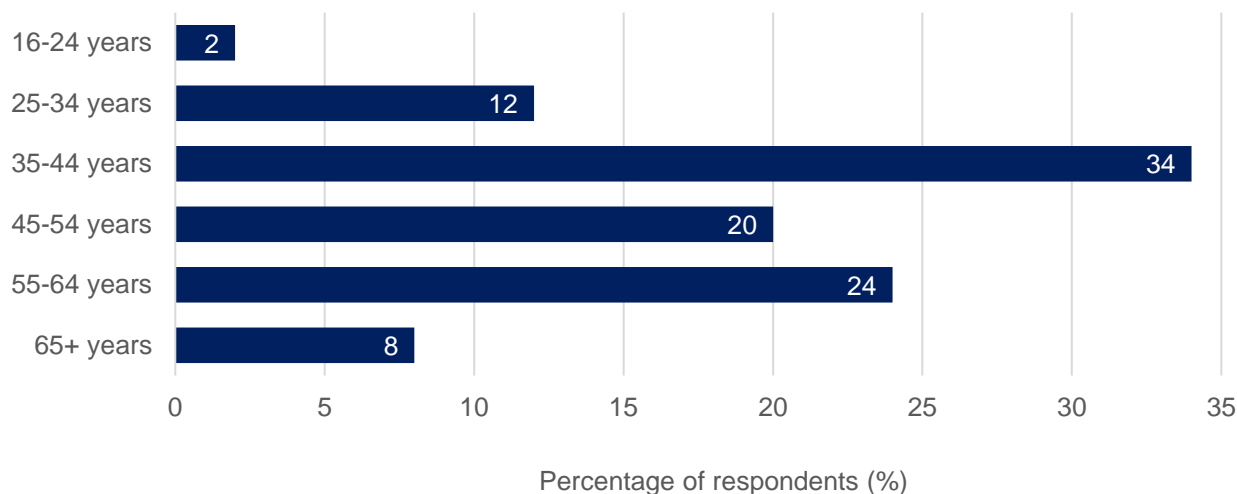
Base: Total sample (50)

Figure 4 shows that the majority of respondents are female (72%), whilst 28% are male.
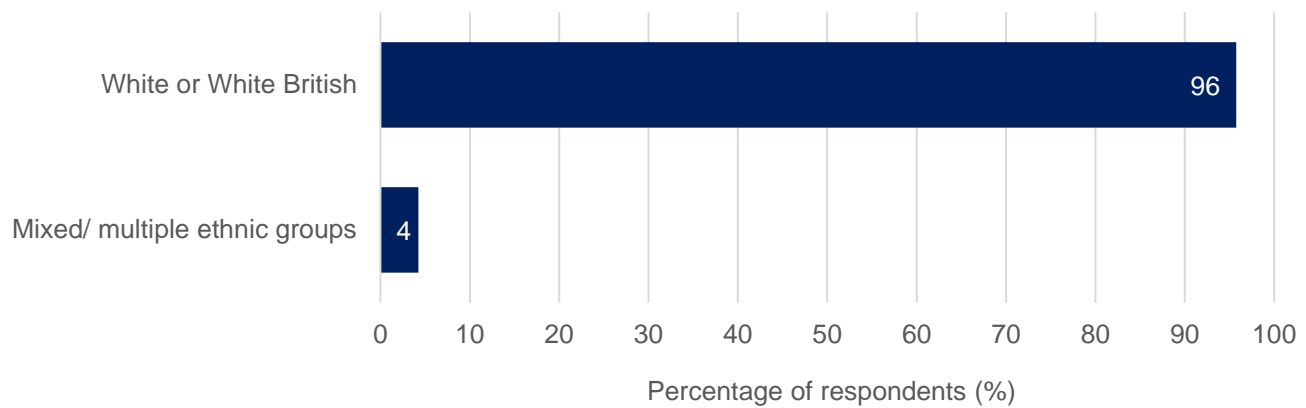
Figure 4: What is your sex?

Base: Total sample (47)

Figure 5 on the following page shows respondents by their ethnic group. The vast majority of respondents are White or White British (96%), whilst just 4% come from mixed/ multiple ethnic groups.

Figure 5: Which of the following ethnic groups do you belong to?

Base: Total sample (47)

Figure 6 shows that most respondents do not consider themselves to have a disability, illness or condition that reduces their ability to carry out day-to-day activities (82%), whilst 18% do.

Figure 6: Do you consider yourself to have a disability, or a long-term illness, physical or mental health condition that reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities?
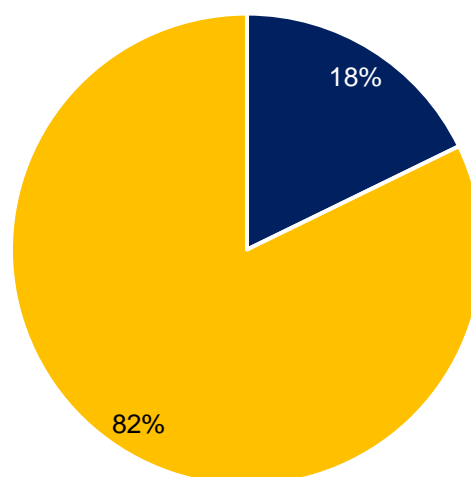
Base: Total sample (45)

The most commonly reported disability is a physical disability, reported by over half of respondents with a disability. Figure 7 on the following page shows the breakdown of disability types among respondents.

Figure 7: What type of disability, long-term illness, physical or mental health condition do you have?
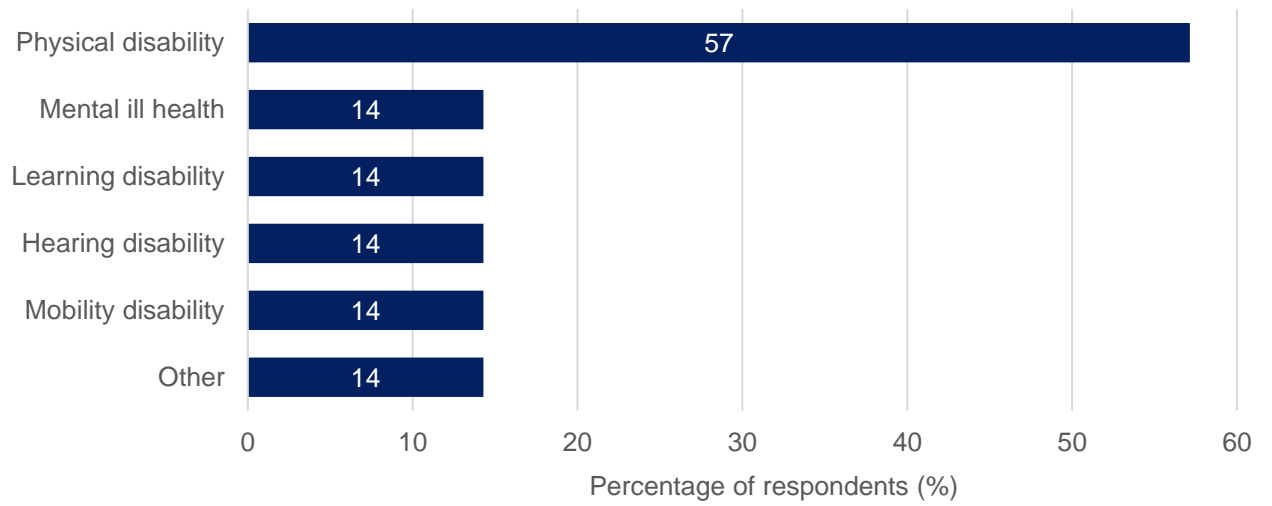

Base: Respondents with a disability (7*) *Caution small base

5.2 The five strategic aims

Five strategic aims have been proposed to form Portsmouth's Homelessness Strategy. These are listed below.

1. **Prevent homelessness:** Prevent incidences of homelessness wherever possible. Relieve more homelessness where prevention is not an option.
2. **End rough-sleeping:** Ensure rough sleeping is rare, brief, and not recurring.
3. **Provide the right housing to relieve homelessness:** Ensure people are provided with accommodation that meets their needs and lets them feel safe and secure.
4. **Provide the right support:** Whatever accommodation a person has, ensure they can access the right support at the right time to help them sustain it.
5. **Strengthen collaborative working:** Improve communication with people at risk of homelessness. Strengthen local partnerships to prevent homelessness more.

The following section of analysis details respondents' levels of agreement with the above strategic aims. Those who do not agree with any of the aims, or feel something is missing from the strategy, were asked to expand on this.

Figure 8 shows that the vast majority of respondents agree that the strategic aims are the right ones (95% agree or strongly agree), whilst just 4% disagree. Respondents working in a partner organisation most strongly agree with the strategic aims, followed by those who have ever experienced, or been threatened with, homelessness, although caution should be taken interpreting these results due to small bases.

Figure 8: To what extent do you agree or disagree that these five aims are the right ones?
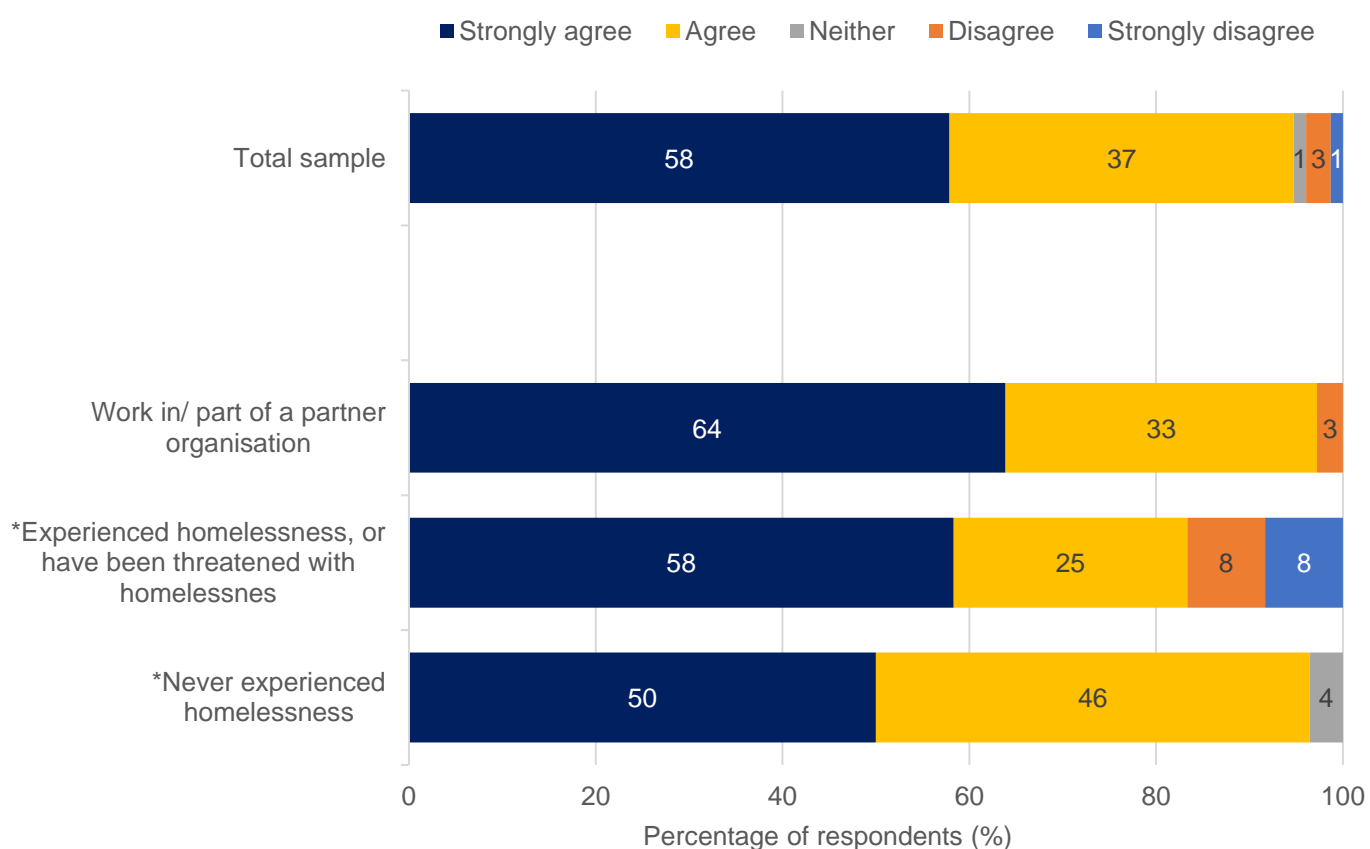

Base: from top to bottom - total sample (76) | (36), (12*), (28*) *Caution small base

Respondents who disagree were asked to indicate which of the five aims they disagree with, or if they feel anything is missing from the strategic aims. Figure 9 shows that, of those who disagree, 25% disagree with Aim 3 (Provide the right housing to relieve homelessness) and 75% feel something is missing. Caution should be taken interpreting these results due to a small base.

Figure 9: Which of the five aims do you disagree with?
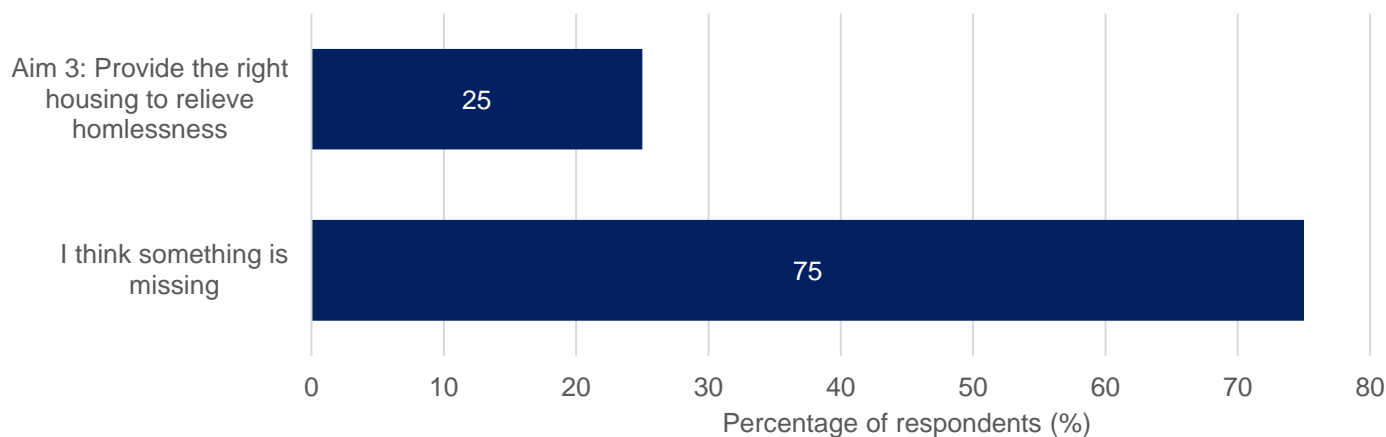
Base: Respondents who disagree that the strategic aims are the right ones (4*) *Caution small base

Respondents were then asked to expand on why they disagree with any of the aims, or what they feel is missing. One respondent disagrees with Aim 3, as they do not feel confident that the council currently provides appropriate housing to relieve homelessness (Quote 1).

Quote 1: Why do you disagree with Aim 3: Provide the right housing to relieve homelessness?

"Because this don't [sic] happen."

- *Respondent who is currently homeless*

Quotes 2 and 3 show what respondents feel is missing from the strategic aims. One respondent feels that the strategic aims have not adequately covered issues relating to overcrowding for council tenants who are currently housed, meaning this investigation is not a priority. Another respondent, however, feels that issues relating to ways of working within the system have not been adequately addressed by the strategic aims, particularly in relation to the impact of the tender process on providing services and working collaboratively.

Quote 2 and 3: What do you feel is missing from the strategic aims?

"Address the over-crowding problems for existing PCC tenants. Particularly those that are very overcrowded and have been for a long time. They are often low-band priority which gives them little hope for a brighter future, and often children are adversely affected."

- *Responding on behalf of a partner organisation*

"Preventing the tender process from allowing services to bid to provide current service levels (or better) with less cost. Also, collaborative working is difficult when tender competitors use different systems for logging client support/interactions/actions and outcomes."

- *Respondent who has experienced homelessness in the past, but is not currently homeless*

Respondents were also asked, overall, if they had any further comments to make about the proposed strategic aims. Table 2 shows key themes identified in responses.

Table 2: Do you have any (other) comments to make about the proposed strategic aims?

Key themes	Percentage of respondents (%)
Strategy and aims need to be Portsmouth-specific	9
Uncertain about council's ability to fulfil the strategic aims/ they are too ambitious	9
Review current provision of accommodation	8
General agreement/ support for the aims	5
Support should be situation/ case specific	5
There should be more of a focus on prevention	4
Role of partnerships should be considered and utilised	4
Other	5
No relevant comment	*66*

Base: Total sample (76)

The highest proportion of respondents express that they feel the strategy and its aims needs to be Portsmouth specific, taking into account the level of **housing provision on an island city** and tackling **key areas where homelessness is notably present**, such as on Palmerston Road in Southsea (9%). The same proportion also express uncertainty about the council's ability to fulfil the strategic aims due to a **potential lack of resources or effective staff,** or feel that the aims could be too ambitious to achieve, making them feel **unrealistic**.

8% of respondents suggest reviewing the current provision of accommodation when considering the direction of these aims, to ensure that provided accommodation is **liveable**, **appropriate**, and **suitable for its purpose and the needs** of applicants. 5% of respondents express a general agreement with or support of the strategic aims. The same proportion feel that **support** laid out by the strategic aims should be situation specific and **person-centred**, to **meet the needs** of applicants and ensure that it is tailored on a **case-by-case basis**.

Other respondents feel that the strategic aims should place more emphasis on **prevention of homelessness**, rather than focusing on the implications. Respondents suggest that the role of partnerships should be considered and **well-communicated** in order to **maximise collaborative working and engagement** as part of the strategy, ensuring that applicants receive the correct and appropriate support.

5% of respondents left 'other' responses, including suggestions for a **long-term plan to increase social housing** and **more involvement to in outsourced services**.

Quotes 4 and 5 show quotes from respondents to support the findings shown in Table 2.

Quotes 4 and 5: Other comments from respondents on the proposed strategic aims.

"To end rough sleeping is ambitious particularly given the limited accommodation available within Portsmouth and the small number of hard to reach rough sleepers."

- *Responding on behalf of a partner organisation*

" I am keen to see that current provision will be explored/reviewed as there are gaps in provision e.g. similar to care home provision for those with high risk, substance misuse, capacity issues and personal care issues."

<div align="right">-   Responding on behalf of a partner organisation</div>

5.3 Aim 1: Prevent homelessness

Prevent incidences of homelessness wherever possible. Relieve more homelessness where prevention is not an option.

Each strategic aim is accompanied by certain areas of focus within the draft strategy document. For the first aim of preventing homelessness, the following areas of focus have been suggested:

- Increase the proportion of homeless applications made at 'prevention' stage.
- Increase rates of successful prevention for the most common causes of homelessness.
- Reduce the proportion of applications that are ended as a result of the council losing contact with the person who was homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- Form a multi-disciplinary prevention hub dedicated to homeless prevention.
- Reduce the caseloads of officers dealing with homelessness applications, allowing for more proactive casework.
- Ensure people receive meaningful assessments and tailored housing plans.
- Create specific workstreams for specific groups to reduce the likelihood and impact of a negative decision

The following section details levels of agreement with the areas of focus listed under the first strategic aim. Figure 10 on the following page shows that 93% of respondents agree that these are the right focus areas; just under half of respondents 'strongly agree' (47%) and the same proportion 'agree'. Just 2% of respondents disagree. Respondents representing a partner organisation all agree with these focus areas (100%), whilst disagreement is only expressed by those who have ever experienced, or been threatened with, homelessness (9%), although caution should be taken interpreting these results due to small bases.

Figure 10: To what extent do you agree or disagree that these are the right areas to focus on to achieve Aim 1?
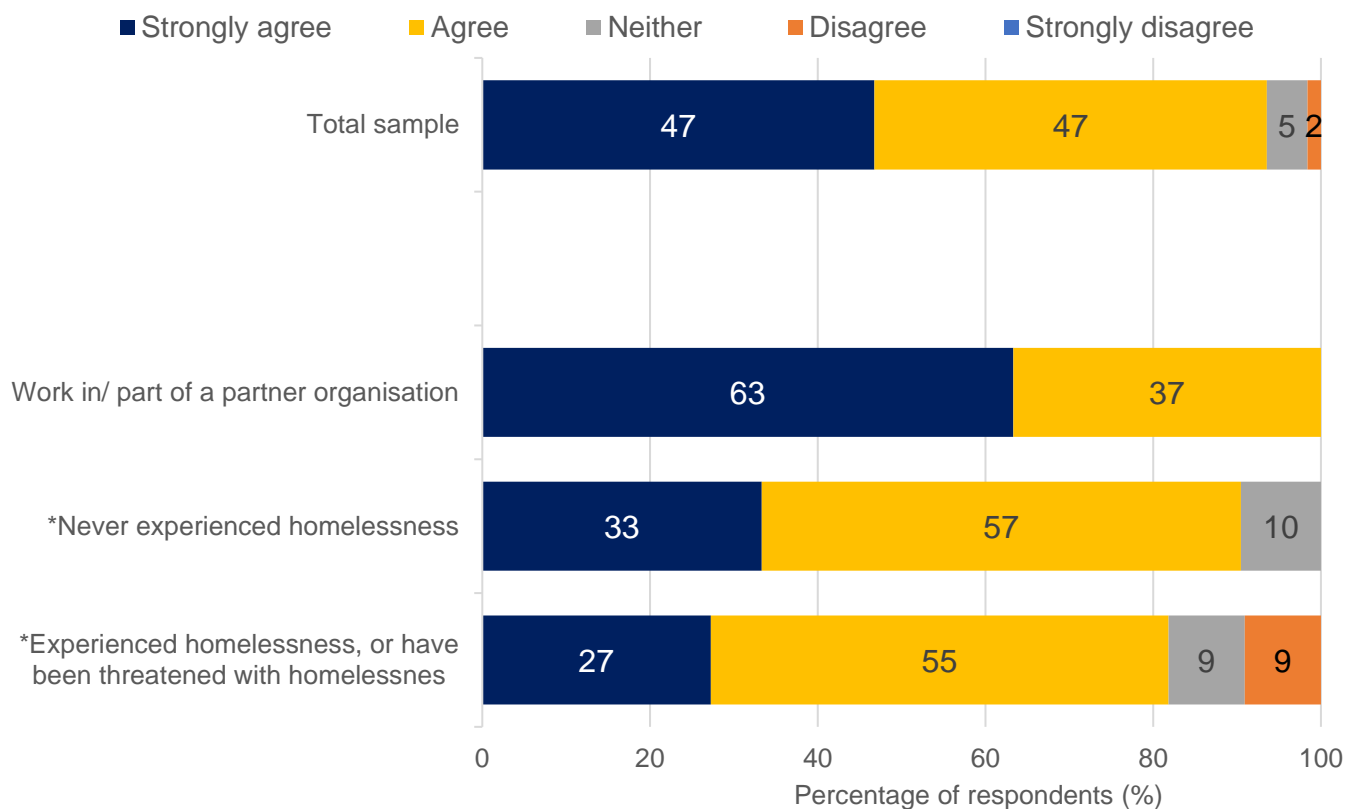
Base: from top to bottom - total sample (62) | (30), (21*), (11*) *Caution small base

Just one respondent disagrees with the areas of focus for Aim 1. Figure 11 shows the areas they disagree with, alongside feeling that something is missing.

Figure 11: Which areas of focus do you disagree with?

Increase the proportion of homeless applications made at 'prevention' stage.

Increase rates of successful prevention for the most common causes of homelessness.

Reduce the proportion of applications that are ended as a result of the council losing contact with the person who was homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Ensure people receive meaningful assessments and tailored housing plans.

> Create specific workstreams for specific groups to reduce the likelihood and impact of a negative decision.

> I think something is missing.

Base: Respondents who disagree with the areas of focus for Aim 3 (1*)

Respondents were asked to expand on why they disagree with the areas of focus, and what they feel is missing. Quote 6 shows this respondent's reasoning for disagreeing with these proposed areas of focus for Aim 1.

Quote 6: Why do you disagree with these proposed areas of focus for Aim 1?

> *"Only way to prevent homelessness is to force landlords to reduce rents and insist that courts do not evict people who suffer financial hardships and have offered repayment plans but do evict tenants who exhibit criminal behaviour and drug abuse in the property."*
> *- Respondent who is, or has been, threatened with homelessness*

This respondent feels that the suggested areas of focus are not the most important factor for preventing homelessness; they feel that homelessness can only be prevented through an acknowledgment and intervention into the role of private sector rental market, particularly through rent costs and avoidable evictions.

Quote 7 shows what they feel is missing.

Quote 7: What do you think is missing?

> *"Prioritize [sic] those who are employed over unemployed as they will need minimum support and will likely not become a financial drain on the council."*
> *- Respondent who is, or has been, threatened with homelessness*

This respondent feels that, to prevent homelessness, the council should direct their resources to applicants who are likely to require the least amount of support - those who are employed - in order to best utilise financial resources.

All respondents were asked whether they had any further comments about the areas of focus for Aim 1: Preventing homelessness. Table 3 on the following page shows the key themes from the further comments.

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Table 3: Do you have any (other) comments to make about the proposed areas of focus for Aim 1?

Key themes	Percentage of respondents (%)
Need to work with partner agencies	5
Should focus on specific groups	5
Should review/ consider accommodation provision	5
Need more resources/ staff to deliver	5
Prioritise the voices of applicants/ those affected	3
Prevention and early intervention is key	3
Should be more explicit about what criteria and targets need to be met	3
Other	3
No relevant comment	*68*

Base: Total sample (62)

5% of respondents feel that to achieve Aim 1, the council needs to work with partner agencies in order to create a **multi-disciplinary approach** to the complex issue. The same proportion suggest focusing on specific groups to ensure intervention is targeted, such as for **families (with children)** or applicants from **within the Portsmouth area** first.

5% of respondents suggest reviewing or considering the current accommodation provision, such as **creating more social housing** stock generally, or ensuring accommodation is **safe** for applicants. The same proportion also feel that **more council resources** and staff are needed in order to achieve this aim.

Some respondents feel that the voices of applicants or those affected by homelessness are prioritised in these areas of focus to ensure support is most **effective and appropriate**, such as including a **trauma-informed approach** to assessments and support. Respondents also express general agreement that prevention and early intervention is key. Other respondents feel that the council should be more explicit about what the **criteria** is that they are working to, and what **targets** they are hoping to meet.

Quote 8 shows a quote from respondents to support the findings shown in Table 3.

Quote 8: Other comment from respondent on the first strategic aim.

> *"I certainly think forming a multi-disciplinary hub will help achieve areas of focus for aim 1. It's important that homelessness is approached from a variety of angles as it's often a variety of causes that can cause homelessness in the first place."*
> *- Respondent who has never experienced homelessness*

5.4 Aim 2: End rough sleeping

Ensure rough sleeping is rare, brief, and not recurring.

For the second aim of ending rough sleeping, the following areas of focus have been suggested:

- Ensure anyone who sleeps rough has an offer of accommodation available to them.
- Commit to adopting a collaborative and flexible approach to supporting people with complex needs.
- Reduce the number of new people sleeping rough.

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- Reduce the typical number of people sleeping rough at any one time.
- Review the suitability of the current pathway: the accommodation settings and the support offered.
- Explore accommodation options for individuals without accommodation and without recourse to public funds.
- Explore options for sustaining currently grant funded services.

The following section details levels of agreement with the areas of focus listed under the second strategic aim. Figure 12 shows that the vast majority of respondents agree that these are the right areas to focus on (93%), and that no respondents disagree with these areas of focus. Agreement is highest amongst those representing a partner organisation, and those who have experienced, or been threatened with, homelessness (at least 50% 'strongly agree').

Figure 12: To what extent do you agree or disagree that these are the right areas to focus on to achieve Aim 2?
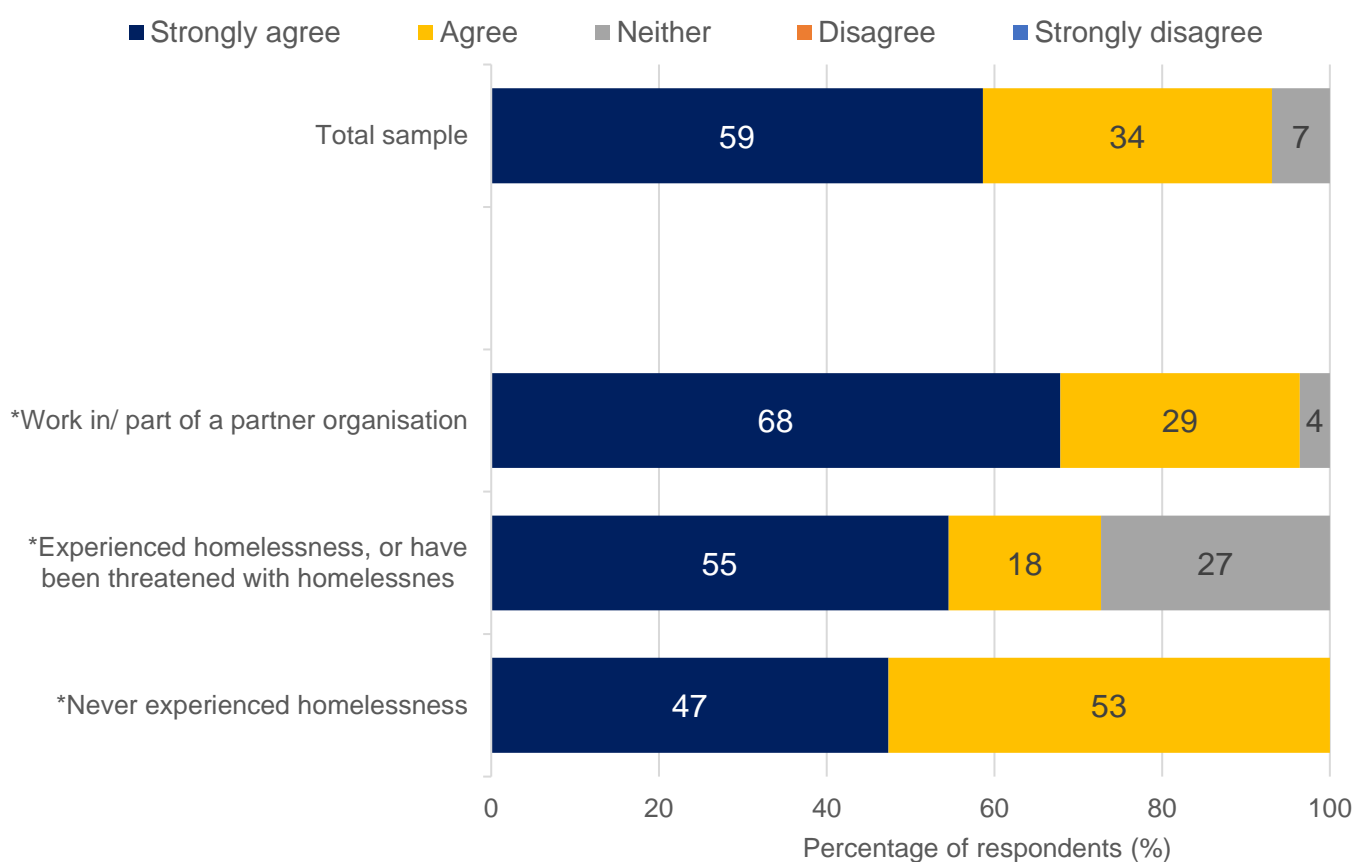
Base: from top to bottom - total sample (58) | (28*), (11*), (19*) *Caution small base

All respondents were asked for any further comments about the areas of focus for Aim 2: End rough sleeping. Table 4 on the following page shows key themes from the further comments.

Table 4: Do you have any (other) comments to make about the proposed areas of focus for Aim 2?

Key themes	Percentage of respondents (%)
Ensure accommodation provision is needs-specific	9
Need to be more proactive	7
Review accommodation provision	7
Efficiently work with partner organisations	5
General agreement with areas of focus	5
Listen to voices of applicants/ those affected	3
Unsure if there is housing resource to achieve this	3
Other	7
No relevant comment	*62*

Base: Total sample (58)

The highest proportion of respondents left comments relating to ensuring that accommodation provided to applicants is needs-specific (9%), such as specifying 'an offer of **suitable** accommodation' available to anyone sleeping rough to ensure applicants **do not return to sleeping rough** where accommodation does not meet their needs. 7% of respondents would like the council to be more proactive about this aim, such as **patrolling at all hours** and **approaching rough sleepers** to direct them to services. The same proportion suggest reviewing accommodation provision to see **what works and does not work**, and to look to provide **more hostels and social housing** to achieve this aim.

5% of respondents suggest efficiently working with partner organisations to ensure the council is **working collaboratively** with the appropriate organisations to achieve shared aims. The same proportion express general agreement with the aim and focus areas. Smaller proportions suggest listening to the voices of those affected to **feed into strategic development** and ensure applicants have some **say** in choosing where they are directed to.

'Other' comments include queries into **how the council will achieve this**, including a suggestion that housing officers will need to **change their approach** to this issue, and uncertainty about achieving this aim due to **resistance** from those applicants who do not want to change how they live.

Quotes 9 and 10 show quotes from respondents to support the findings shown in Table 4.

Quotes 9 and 10. Other comments from respondents on the second strategic aim.

> *"'Ensure anyone who sleeps rough has an offer of accommodation available to them. - This should be "an offer of suitable accommodation" as some of the more complex people are not being offered anywhere suitable, because there is not sufficient range of options in the City."*
>
> *-   Responding on behalf of a partner organisation*

> *"I hope there is a plan in place to pro-actively approach people sleeping rough to tell them of the services available to them, rather than expecting them to come into the council offices and ask for support."*
>
> *- Respondent who has never experienced homelessness*

## 5.5 Aim 3: Provide the right housing to relieve homelessness

Ensure people are provided with accommodation that meets their needs and lets them feel safe and secure.

For the third aim of providing the right housing to relieve homelessness, the following areas of focus have been suggested:

- Increase the supply of good quality, affordable accommodation.
- Ensure temporary accommodation has suitable cooking and washing facilities.
- Undertake a review of the allocations policy for social housing, including its relationship with homelessness.
- Increase the number of households successfully assisted into privately rented accommodation.
- Undertake a citywide review of supported housing to ensure accommodation is suitable and is the right setting.
- Consider what possible gaps exist in supported housing provision and commissioning options to fill those gaps.

The following section details levels of agreement with the areas of focus listed under the third strategic aim. Figure 14 shows that most respondents agree these are the right areas (92% 'agree' or 'strongly agree'), whilst just 2% 'disagree'. Those working in a partner organisation are most likely to 'strongly agree' (68%), whilst disagreement comes from those who have never experienced homelessness (6%).

Figure 14: To what extent do you agree or disagree that these are the right areas to focus on to achieve Aim 3?
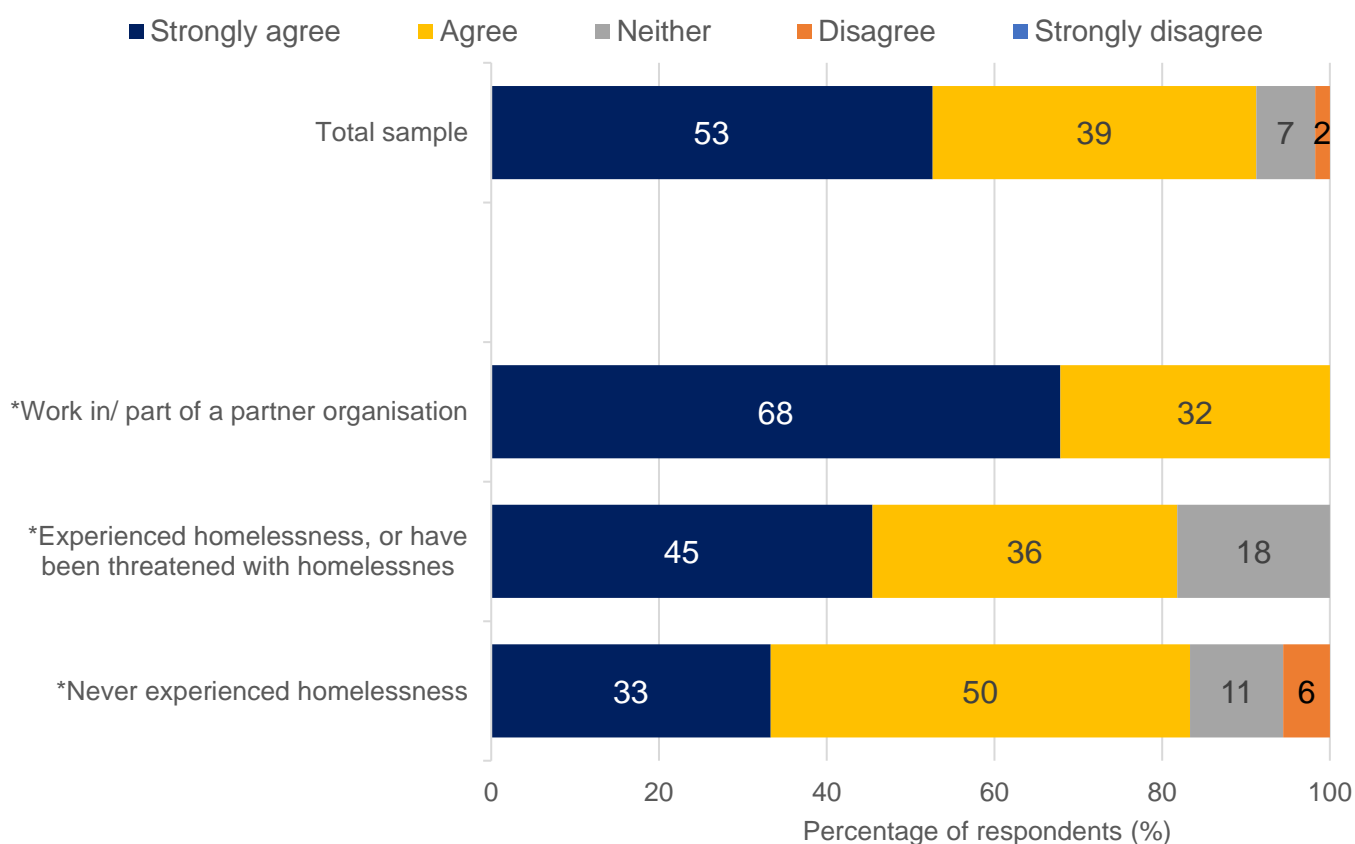
Base: from top to bottom - total sample (57) | (28*), (11*), (18*) *Caution small base

Just one respondent disagrees with one area of focus for Aim 3, shown below in Figure 15.

Figure 15: Which areas of focus do you disagree with?

> Increase the supply of good quality, affordable accommodation.

Quote 11 shows their reasoning for disagreeing with this focus area.

Quote 11: Why do you disagree with these proposed areas of focus for Aim 3?

"They will be put into respectable neighborhoods [sic] which bring the area down."

- *Respondent who has never experienced homelessness*

This respondent expresses concern over the placement of the increased accommodation provision for applicants, feeling that it will negatively impact the surrounding area.

All respondents were asked for any further comments about the areas of focus for Aim 3: Provide the right housing to relieve homelessness. Table 5 shows key themes from these comments.

Table 5: Do you have any (other) comments to make about the proposed areas of focus for Aim 3?

Key themes	Percentage of respondents (%)
Housing will need to be assessed and offered on a case-by-case basis/ must be needs-specific	9
Review current provision of accommodation on offer	9
Be more involved in private sector renting	5
Concern over resource limitations in Portsmouth	4
General agreement with the areas of focus	4
Housing provision needs to be combined with targeted and effective support	4
There should be a bigger focus on safety	4
No relevant comment	*67*

Just under a tenth of respondents feel that housing will need to be assessed and offered on a case-by-case basis, ensuring it is needs-specific to the applicant (9%), taking into consideration where **additional support** may be needed (e.g. for women) or how certain accommodation may not be suitable due to **personal circumstances**. The same proportion suggest a review of the current provision of accommodation on offer to find any **gaps in provision** and figure out **what is currently working** and what isn't, in order to provide the *right* housing.

Respondents would also like to see the council become more involved in private sector renting, **working with landlords** to provide suitable accommodation and intervening to **reduce overall rent** costs. 4% of respondents express a concern over **housing resource limitations** in Portsmouth or express general agreement with the areas of focus. The same proportion feel that housing provision will only be effective

when combined with **targeted and effective support** for applicants or feel that there should be a bigger focus on safety in the third aim to provide **secure and suitable** accommodation.

Quotes 12 and 13 show quotes from respondents to support the findings shown in Table 5.

Quotes 12 and 13: Other comments from respondents on the third strategic aim

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"Consider what possible gaps exist in supported housing provision and commissioning options to fill those gaps - The gap is working to accommodate and support the more vulnerable people who need emergency and medium term accommodation."

- Responding on behalf of a partner organisation

"I think safety is the key word here. The strategy must take into account making sure vunerable [sic] people are not placed in housing or situations where their personal circumstances. For example, recovering drug addicts placed in close proximity to other drug users." [sic]

- Respondent who has never experienced homelessness

5.6 Aim 4: Provide the right support

Whatever accommodation a person has, ensure they can access the right support at the right time to help them sustain it.

For the fourth aim of providing the right support, the following areas of focus have been suggested:

- Reduce the number of evictions from supported housing.
- Increase the proportion of households that successfully move on from supported accommodation into an independently managed tenancy.
- Undertake a citywide review of supported housing to consider the type of support provided and whether it should be attached to an offer of accommodation.
- Build upon the mental health awareness of officers dealing with homelessness applications in recognition of the clear link between homelessness and mental health.
- Review processes and policies relating to safeguarding and risk-management.

The following section details levels of agreement with the areas of focus listed under the fourth strategic aim. Figure 16 shows that 91% of respondents agree that these focus areas are the right ones, whilst 6% disagree. Those working in a partner organisation express the highest level of agreement with the focus areas (100% 'agree' or 'strongly agree'), whilst those who have experienced, or have been threatened with, homelessness express the highest level of disagreement (20%), although caution should be taken interpreting these results due to small base numbers.

Figure 16: To what extent do you agree or disagree that these are the right areas to focus on to achieve Aim 4?
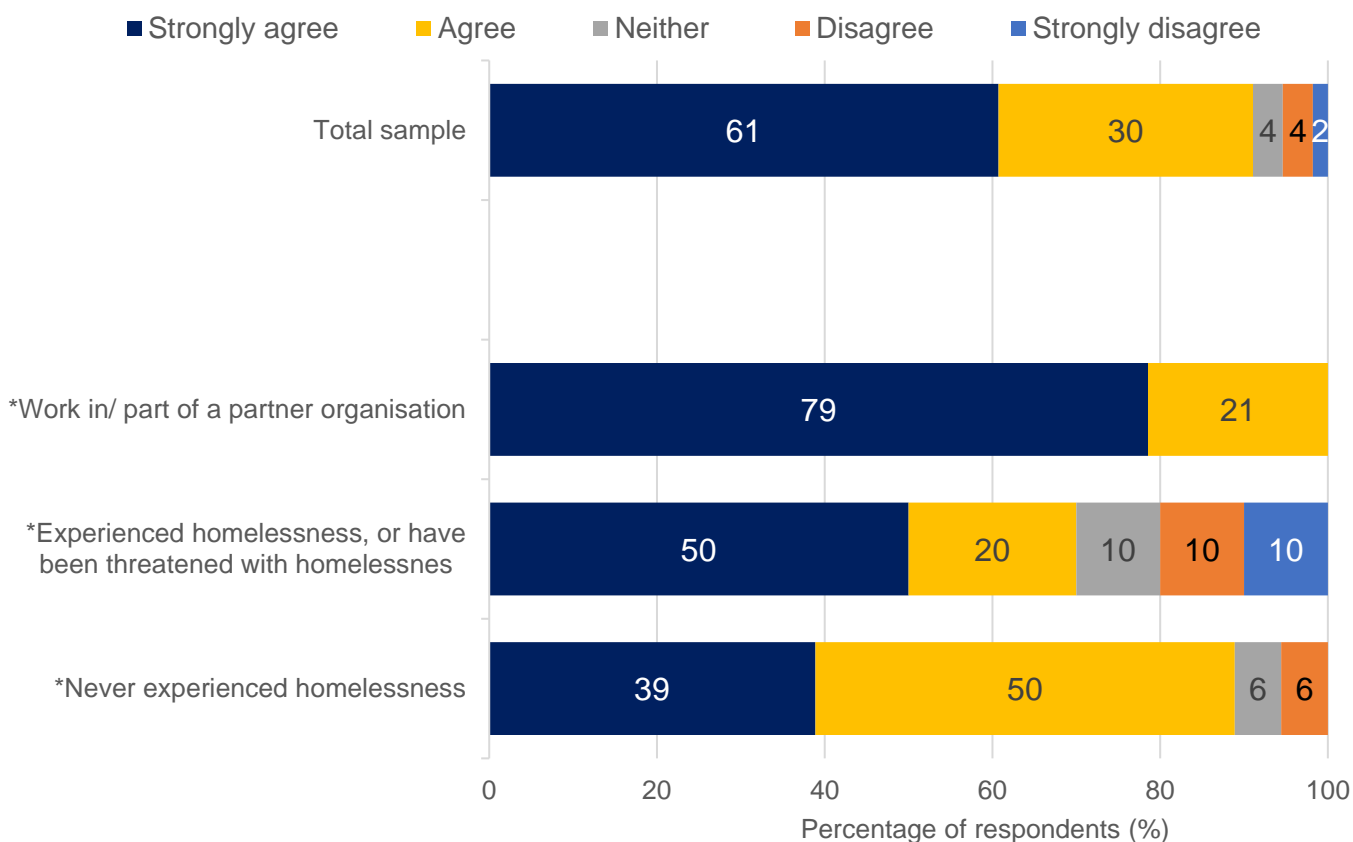
Base: from top to bottom - total sample (56) | (28*), (10*), (18*) *Caution small base

Respondents who disagree were asked to indicate which of the areas of focus they disagree with, or if they feel anything is missing from Aim 4. Figure 17 shows that two thirds of respondents disagree with reducing the number of evictions from support housing, whilst a third each disagree with reviewing processes and policies relating to safeguarding and risk-management or feel that something is missing.

Figure 17: Which areas of focus do you disagree with?

Base: Respondents who disagree with the areas of focus for Aim 4 (3*) *Caution small base

Respondents were then asked to expand on why they disagree with the areas of focus, or what they feel is missing. Quotes 14 and 15 show reasons why respondent disagree with these areas of focus.

Quotes 14 and 15: Why do you disagree with these proposed areas of focus for Aim 4?

> *"How would you reduce the number of evictions for drug takers who won't follow any rules."*
>
> - *Respondent who has never experienced homelessness*

> *"It would be really difficult to reduce evictions whilst reviewing processes and policies relating to safeguarding and risk-management. People are more often than not evicted because they are a danger to the service, themselves or others. Reducing evictions would mean increasing the risk of harm to the service, clients, staff and community members.*
>
> - *Respondent who has experienced homelessness in the past, but is not currently homeless*

Both respondents express concern over the ability to effectively reduce the number of evictions, particularly in conjunction with also reviewing processes around safe guarding, they feel that this will be contradictory given that people who are evicted are generally posing a threat to safety.

Quote 16 on the following page shows what respondents feel is missing from these areas of focus.

Quote 16: What do you think is missing?

"Work with landlords to evict problematic tenants who clearly need a more structured environment and move in higher quality tenants who are productive to society."

- *Respondent who is, or has been, threatened with homelessness*

Specifically relating to reducing evictions from support housing, this respondent feels that this aim is missing a focus on working with landlords where there are issues with tenants, to provide the right kind of support for these tenants and open up spaces for other applicants in need of accommodation.

All respondents were asked for any further comments about the areas of focus for Aim 4: Provide the right support. Table 6 shows key themes from these responses.

Table 6: Do you have any (other) comments to make about the proposed areas of focus for Aim 4?

Key themes	Percentage of respondents (%)
Need a holistic approach to assessment and provision for suitable and relevant housing	13
Currently under-resourced for specialist assessments	7
General agreement with areas of focus	7
Need more efficient working with partnerships	5
Review approaches to accommodation provision	5
Ensure frontline staff are trained in mental health and homelessness impacts	5
Have more proactive language	4
Other	7
No relevant comment	*54*

Base: Total sample (56)

The highest proportion of respondents suggest a holistic approach to the assessment and provision of housing to ensure it is **suitable and relevant** for applicants (13%), ensuring that services work together to consider **mental and physical health** to support applicants alongside providing housing. 7% of respondents feel that the council are currently under-resourced for specialist assessments, possibly making it **difficult to provide the right support** without understanding what is required. The same proportion express general agreement with the areas of focus.

5% of respondents feel that there needs to be more **efficient collaborative working** between the council and partnerships to **bridge the gap in mental health assessments** and **make navigating services as easy as possible** for applicants. The same proportion suggest a review of approaches to accommodation provision, ensuring there is enough housing resource and that applicants are placed and **retained** in **secure and appropriate** accommodation, such as supported housing. 5% also suggest ensuring that frontline staff receive training in the impacts of both mental health issues and homelessness to provide an **effective first point of contact** for applicants who may be experiencing both. Other respondents would like to see more proactive language, changing 'provide the right support' to 'provide the right *interventions'* and including **actions beyond 'reviews'**.

Quotes 17 and 18 on the following page show quotes from respondents to support the findings shown in Table 6.

"The evictions are as a result of being placed in unsuitable accommodation. Mental and physical health never considered. Breakdowns as a result of this, evicted and duty of care ended. Housing officers need training in assessing, listening and compassion."

- *Responding on behalf of a partner organisation*

"More Partnership working with Mental Health Services, some are good but there are gaps and understanding around a customer needing support, as at times the focus is purely on accommodation, which is a huge factor is someones [sic] wellbeing, however they also need a joint approach from mental health services to deal with the long term Mental Health conditions whatever they may be and work alongside us handling managing the customer through the homeless application journey."

- *Respondent who has never experienced homelessness*

5.7 Aim 5: Strengthen collaborative working

Improve communication with people at risk of homelessness. Strengthen local partnerships to prevent homelessness more often.

For the fifth aim of strengthening collaborative working, the following areas of focus have been suggested:

- Continue working to ensure homelessness and its underlying causes are a system-wide responsibility for all partners.
- Widen the focus of partnerships that have focussed on rough sleeping to include a strong focus on other types of homelessness, and specifically prevention.
- Understand the relationship between homelessness and various asylum schemes.
- Give people good advice about their rights and options.
- Ensure advice is given in a format that can be referred to at a later date.

The following section details levels of agreement with the areas of focus listed under the fifth strategic aim. Figure 18 on the following page shows that the majority of respondents agree that these are the right focus areas (93%); no respondents disagree with these focus areas. Agreement is highest amongst those working in a partner organisation, and those who have never experienced homelessness (at least 50% 'strongly agree').

Figure 18: To what extent do you agree or disagree that these are the right areas to focus on to achieve Aim 5?
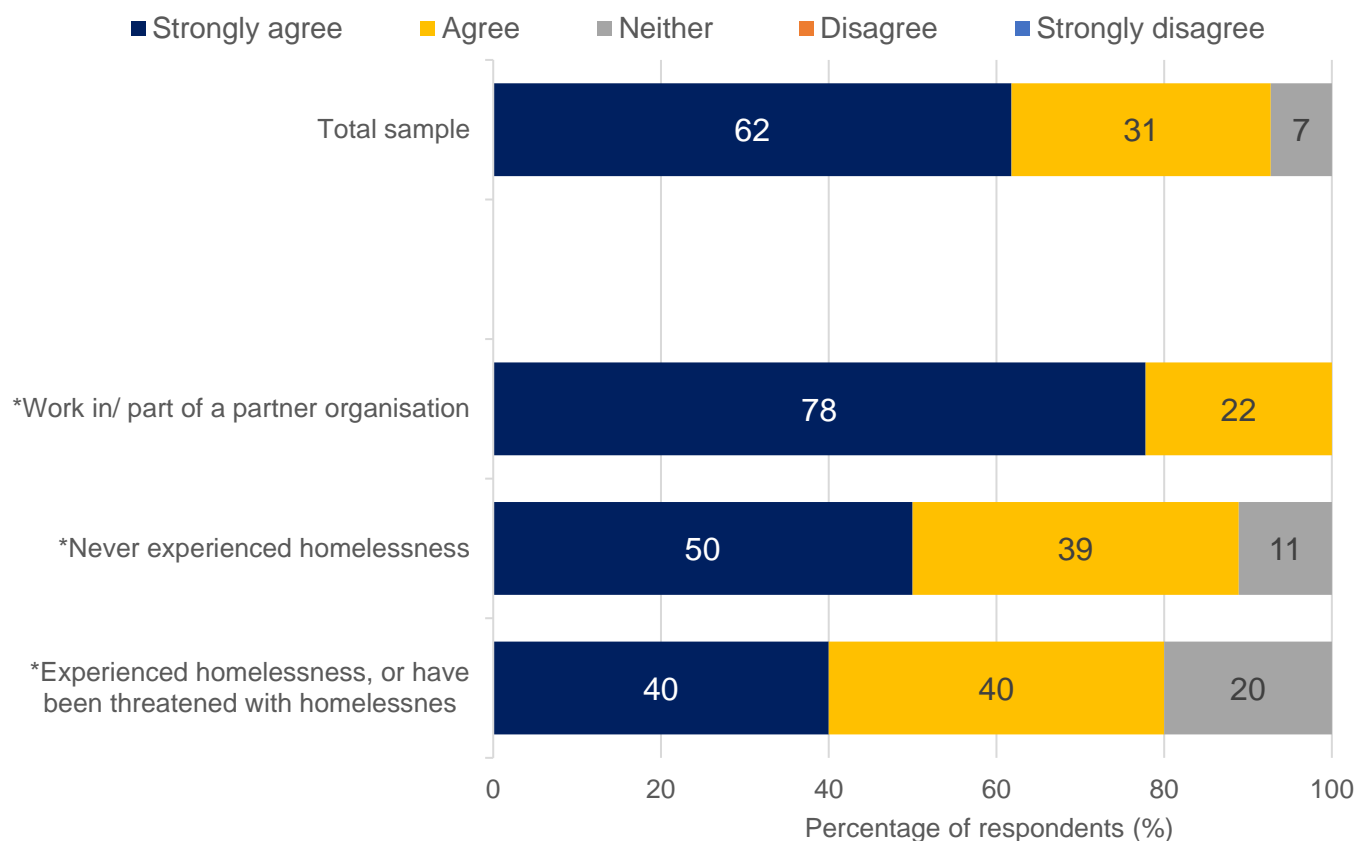
Base: from top to bottom - total sample (55) | (27*), (18*), (10*) *Caution small base

All respondents were asked for any further comments about the areas of focus for Aim 5: Strengthen collaborative working. Table 7 shows key themes from these comments.

Table 7: Do you have any (other) comments to make about the proposed areas of focus for Aim 5?

Key themes	Percentage of respondents (%)
There should be integrated and collaborative working with partnerships	9
There should open forums/ open dialogues	7
Recognition that situations can be complex/ require more involved support	5
Need more training and education	4
Would like to see more work done in this area	4
Ensure funding is well-utilised	4
Improve communication with the general public	2
Other	7
No relevant comment	*64*

Base: Total sample (55)

Just under a tenth of respondents feel the council's work with partnerships should be integrated and collaborative to tackle the complex issues associated with homelessness and provide a **strengthened,**

united, and accessible service to applicants (9%). 7% feel that there should be open forums and dialogues between partnerships and the council to **shape the strategy going forward** and encourage the council to **learn from organisations**, as well as vice versa. Other respondents express a recognition that homelessness is a complex situation that sometimes requires more involved support to **build trust**, **work effectively**, and ensure all applicants can **engage with the service** (such as considering language barriers).

4% of respondents feel that more training and education is needed within partnerships to **improve knowledge and capabilities** in pursuit of joint aims. The same proportion feel that the council has **not yet demonstrated effective collaborative working** with partnerships. 4% suggest ensuring that funding is well-utilised in this collaboration, such as being **directed towards preventing homelessness** or being assessed at a wider level to consider how it can be **spread wider across services**. Other respondents feel that communication should be improved with the general public too, to **tackle misunderstandings** about homelessness and asylum seekers.

'Other' responses include a recognition of the limitations on collaborative working, particularly data sharing, imposed by services being run by different tender competitors.

Quotes 19 and 20 show quotes from respondents to support the findings shown in Table 7.

Quotes 19 and 20: Other comments from respondents on the fifth strategic aim

"Portsmouth would benefit from a commissioning board to ensure money is spread wider ensuring the funding is utilised. Co-located services would be of benefit to help clients who are not able to navigate multiple professionals they may be working with or unaware of."
- *Responding on behalf of a partner organisation*

"Recommend to add a point in at one start to include capturing key data and intel in relation to what contributes to homelessness. This intelligence should inform the collaborative work."
- *Respondent who has experienced homelessness in the past, but is not currently homeless*

5.8 Further comments

At the end of this consultation, respondents were asked if they had any other comments on Portsmouth's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy overall. Common themes expressed by respondents from the open-ended comments are shown in Table 8 on the following page.

Table 8: Further comments on Portsmouth's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy document

Key themes	Percentage of respondents (%)
General agreement with/ support for the strategy	7
Should reassess the type of help offered/ who receives help	7
Assessments are not comprehensive enough	5
Be thoughtful and purposeful with accommodation provision	5
Uncertain about the council's capacity, resources, and funding	5
There should be greater recognition of intersectional issues	4
Focus on safety/ safeguarding	4
Prevention should be the main focus of the strategy	2
Other	5
No relevant comment	*55*

Base: Total sample (55)

The highest proportion of respondents express a general agreement with or support for the strategy document, feeling it is **necessary** and **well-informed** (7%). The same proportion feel the council should reassess the type of help that is on offer or who is entitled to receive help, particularly considering **applicants who either work or are not entitled to universal credit** but may still need additional housing support.

5% of respondents feel that the current assessments are not comprehensive enough, largely due to a **lack of resources and training** in this area, meaning individuals are **not adequately provided with the most relevant accommodation**. Relatedly, the same proportion feel the council should be more thoughtful and purposeful with their accommodation provision, ensuring that applicants are placed in **suitable and appropriate** housing, for both the benefit of the individual and of others in the same or surrounding accommodations. 5% express uncertainty about the council's **capacity, resources and funding to deliver** on this strategy, although they agree with the aims and areas of focus.

4% of respondents feel that there should be a greater recognition of intersectional issues which impact the experience of homelessness, such as applicants who are **LGBT, (male) victims of domestic abuse, and immigrants with a NRPF status (particularly women**). The same proportion feel there should be a bigger focus on **safety and safeguarding** in the strategy. Other respondents feel that **prevention of homelessness** should be the main focus of the strategy (2%).

'Other' comments include requests to **embed feedback from this consultation** into the strategic aims and to **keep businesses and residents informed** on the strategy.

Quotes 21 - 24 show quotes from respondents to support the findings shown in Table 8.

Quotes 21 - 24: Further comments from respondents

"The intelligence lead, inclusive approach is an important golden thread."

- Respondent who has experienced homelessness in the past, but is not currently homeless

"I think it is unfair that the discretionary housing payment is only available to people on UC housing or housing benefit, this means those facing homelessness from living with parents, or sofa-surfing, cannot access the fund, which is a vital support line."

- Responding on behalf of a partner organisation

"Utilise the empty shops and offices for supported housing, new council housing, rough sleepers [sic] provision and temporary housing. There is enough space which would mean no rough sleeping would be occurring […] Work should be done to stop landlords evicting tenants with no reason and stop passing court costs to the tenant."

- Respondent who has experienced homelessness in the past, but is not currently homeless

"Whatever we can do to stop people becoming homeless in the first place should be our focus, as well as increasing the number of safe spaces for those that have become homeless thus minimising any periods rough sleeping."

- Responding on behalf of a partner organisation