

Cyrenians Strategic Plan 2024-2027

Taking a Public Health Approach to
Homelessness Prevention

cyrenians

Welcome to our strategic plan. This is our guide for the next three years. It informs everything that we do towards preventing any experience of homelessness, just as our values – of compassion, respect, integrity and innovation – inform the way that we work. This plan sets out our priorities, the actions we will take towards achieving them and the measures we have in place to evaluate our success.



A Public Health Approach to Homelessness Prevention

Our ambition with this strategy is to lift homelessness from being siloed as a housing issue to homelessness being understood across all sectors as a public health issue. We will achieve this by modelling the change required ourselves and influencing policymakers to make the change in their decision-making. We know homelessness impacts on the health of the nation, on the outcomes of our young people, on the life expectancies of people living in dangerous, lonely and precarious circumstances. A public health approach strives to stop people becoming homeless by offering support at the earliest opportunity rather than waiting until a crisis happens. It also draws on a scientific evidence base that is multi-disciplinary, so it relies on knowledge from all sectors – social services, health, education, justice, policy and the private sector – and commits to people finding solutions to homelessness together.

Playing to our Strengths

A public health approach is necessarily broad in nature, but we do not intend to do everything ourselves. Having grown as an organisation by 65% in the last five years, this new strategy will focus our activity on increasing our influence on policy and the depth and quality of our work rather than increasing our size. Any new work will be focussed in the geographies we are already working in and will meet identified need by building on what we already do. We will encourage others to do the things we don't have the skills to do but see as necessary for a public health approach to homeless prevention to be effective.

Created in Collaboration

Our plan has been created in collaboration across the length and breadth of our organisation, taking feedback from the people we support in our services, our staff and volunteers, our board of trustees and using external data and insights. Every person who has contributed to this plan has been affected by homelessness, either directly or by association with people they support and care about. We each have an interest in making sure we do all we can to stop homelessness in the first place and when it occurs, we do all we can to stop it recurring.

Refining our Mission

In developing our new strategic plan, we have reviewed our mission statement to ensure that we have the right focus on who we learn from and who we must influence in order to achieve our goals. As an organisation now over fifty years old, we know that we have to adapt to remain effective and to be targeted in our activity to make the impact where it will most result in change.

And so, in introducing our strategic plan, I end on our renewed mission statement, which is:

To tackle the causes and consequences of homelessness through learning from lived experience; by delivering targeted services which focus on prevention, early intervention and support into a home; and by influencing changes in legislation and policy.

Ewan Aitken, Chief Executive



MAKING A PLAN IN A CRISIS

Our strategic plan is being launched against the backdrop of a housing crisis. In November 2023, the City of Edinburgh Council took the unprecedented decision to declare a housing emergency. It did so to put pressure on Scottish Government to take action in the face of the highest number of homelessness cases on record and a critical shortage of social housing.



Councils across Scotland are unable to cope with requests for support; families are waiting for years in temporary accommodation; people are dying on the streets.

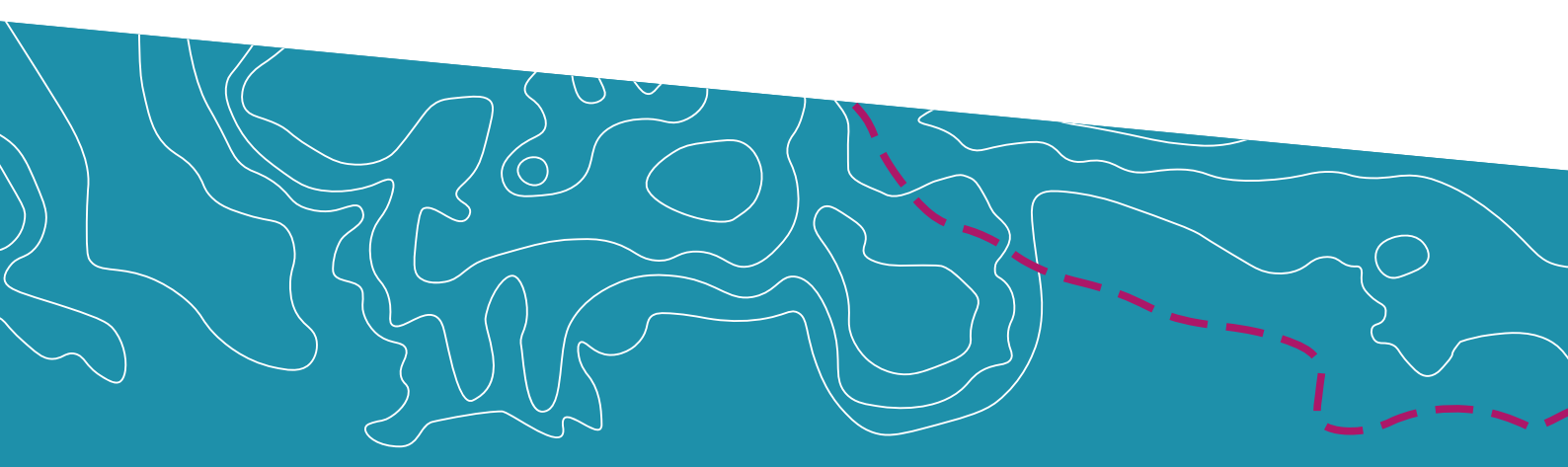
Cyrenians works in the wider context of the homelessness sector in Scotland. We are not a crisis response service, we are a charity that seeks to tackle the causes and consequences of homelessness and prevention is at the heart of what we do. Our activity is place-based, working in communities where people are at risk of homelessness and identifying how our interventions can be most effective in connecting people to services that can help make a difference in preventing homelessness through isolation or exclusion.

To be most effective, we work in partnership with organisations that do what we don't, so that if we can't help, we know who can. We work to influence decision-making in local and national government to commit to solutions that will help us reduce homelessness and prevent it from happening in future.

Our current activity, our influence and our ambition for the future have all been considered in developing our strategic plan. We have also drawn upon a wide range of literature on public health prevention of homelessness, the Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan produced by Scottish Government and COSLA, our work as part of the Task & Finish Group: Prevention, our work as part of The Promise and our accumulated learning from our fifty plus years tackling the causes and consequences of homelessness. The scale of the challenges we face has increased since we started but the opportunity we have to make a difference to a single person's life remains the same.

In maximising the impact of our services we also have to take care of our people. We can't look after others if we don't look after ourselves so it's in our priorities to nurture our people, the environments we work in and our sustainability as an organisation.

Like any good plan created in a crisis, we need to be able to respond to whatever happens next. That's why this three-year strategy will be reviewed every year, allowing us to be agile and responsive whilst still looking to a longer horizon.



TACKLING THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF HOMELESSNESS

Over the next three years, we will be guided by our mission and our values to tackle the causes and consequences of homelessness. We will work with compassion, respect, integrity and innovation as we build trusted relationships to help people towards the stable and fulfilling futures they deserve.

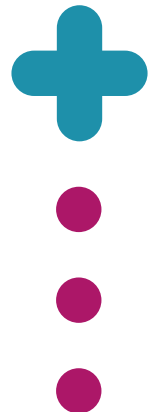


Here are our four aims:

1. We will prevent homelessness using a Public Health Approach

How do we measure our success?

- 1.1** We will be able to show how our approach contributed to the prevention of homelessness, where there was risk, and how we supported the reduction of harm where homelessness occurred. We will set targets for the number of people we support and get their feedback on the impact of that support.
- 1.2** All of our services/enterprises have a clear understanding of the contribution they make to preventing homelessness through a public health lens.
- 1.3** We can evidence that we influenced policy to understand homelessness as a public health issue and, in doing so, we will have facilitated and supported the participation and engagement of those with lived experience.



2. We will respond to evidence-based need with services we are best placed to provide

How do we measure our success?

- 2.1** We are able to clearly articulate our strengths to our main stakeholders and why we have chosen the pathways into homelessness where we focus our work.
- 2.2** We can evidence our continual assessment of matching provision to need, measured against our strengths and ambitions and the outcomes and impact of the decisions we made.
- 2.3** Active Communities of Practice informing our decision-making through their analysis of data from our work across prevention, early intervention and support into a home.



3. We will deliver whole person, whole family and whole community interventions

How do we measure our success?

- 3.1 We have strong and accessible feedback from those we support on how their experience with us helped them on their journey of change.
- 3.2 Our staff and volunteers, as a result of a range of psychological supports available, will tell us that they have confidence in their practice when supporting those with increasingly complex issues.
- 3.3 The people we are supporting through our managed services are telling us that our support has made a difference.
- 3.4 Our services/enterprises are providing the support that service users, carers and professionals need in order to access appropriate support.
- 3.5 We have a culture of sharing positive feedback and ambassadors who can speak on behalf of our volunteer community and our partnership initiatives.



4. We will be an organisation which nurtures its people and is financially and environmentally sustainable

How do we measure our success?

- 4.1 We have an ethical income generation strategy with achievable goals.
- 4.2 We have a measure of our carbon footprint and have devised and implemented a plan to reduce it.
- 4.3 Our staff will tell us that workloads are manageable, and they have sufficient time for reflection, recovery and learning.
- 4.4 Accurate, relevant financial information will be available on a timely basis to those who need it; information held securely; properties in good condition and fit for purpose.
- 4.5 Risk management is a rolling agenda item for the Board; this includes clear devolved responsibility through a scheme of delegation and regular reporting.



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Cyrenians is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), registered charity SC011052