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STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2028

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**TAKING A PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH  
TO HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION**



# CYRENIANS STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2028

## TAKING A PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH TO HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

### OUR MISSION

Cyrenians mission is to tackle the causes and consequences of homelessness through:

- learning from lived experience
- delivering targeted services which focus on prevention, early intervention and support into a home
- and by influencing changes in legislation and policy

### OUR VALUES

Cyrenians is a values led organisation and our way of working is founded on our core four values of Compassion, Respect, Integrity and Innovation

# THE HOUSING EMERGENCY

**In April 2024 we launched our Strategic Plan working towards achieving our mission, by pursuing a public health approach to homelessness prevention, against the backdrop of a fully-fledged Housing Emergency.**

This was formally recognised by the Scottish Parliament in May 2024. The number of households housed in temporary accommodation and the number of children in households assessed as homeless have reached the highest numbers since records began. There is an acute shortage of accommodation for those who need it, nationally, but particularly in Edinburgh. Even emergency accommodation in hotels and B&Bs is in short supply. In legislation, people experiencing homelessness in Scotland have some of the strongest rights anywhere in the world, but in reality, local authorities are increasingly struggling to meet their legal duties towards people presenting as homeless.

Last year councils admitted breaching their duties to realise these rights over 7,000 times, leading the Scottish Housing Regulator to warn of “systemic failure” in the homelessness system. Some councils are now calling on the Scottish Government to roll back the rights people have to assistance from local authorities and water down the standards for properties used to house vulnerable people. Whilst this may reduce the legal and financial burden on struggling local authorities, any such move would do nothing to ensure that people’s fundamental right to a safe and secure home is met.

For the people we support, the ongoing Housing Emergency means lengthy periods living in temporary accommodation, an increase in the number of people housed in accommodation recognised as unsuitable for their needs, or being offered no accommodation at all. It is becoming harder and harder to find suitable accommodation for people coming out of prison or hospital in particular. Following the significant progress made to reduce rough sleeping during the pandemic, it is extremely sad to see levels of rough sleeping now rising above pre-pandemic levels. In 2023/24 2,931 people reported sleeping rough in the three months prior to making a homeless application.



For our staff it is time consuming and emotionally difficult to support people relying on a system that is now stretched to breaking point. Preventing people from reaching crisis point has never been more important. We must acknowledge that we cannot look after others if we do not look after ourselves, so it's in our priorities to nurture our people, the environments we work in and our sustainability as an organisation.

# A PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH TO HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

**The Housing Emergency is a public health emergency. We know homelessness impacts on the health of the nation, on the outcomes of our young people, and on the life expectancies of people living in dangerous, lonely and precarious circumstances.**

The most recent national statistics revealed that half of those who died in Scotland whilst homeless last year were under 45. Homelessness is both a cause and a consequence of poor mental and physical health. A public health approach to homelessness prevention recognises that we can never end homelessness by siloing it as just a housing issue. To end homelessness, we must work across sectors including social services, health, education, justice, policy and the private sector, to offer people support at the earliest opportunity rather than waiting until a crisis happens. Scotland must take a prevention led approach to tackling homelessness, whilst investing in sufficient affordable and social housing.

At Cyrenians we want to contribute to a society in which homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring. In the first year of our strategic plan we have set out how we will deliver services which:

- contribute to preventing homelessness by tackling poverty and building community resilience
- provide early intervention services to groups of people we know are at a higher risk of experiencing homelessness including people going through key transitions such as young people leaving school, home or care or those leaving hospital, residential rehab or prison
- support people who have experienced homelessness into a home with the support and security they need to sustain it

These can be summarised as Prevention, Early Intervention and Support into a Home.



We have also set out how we will work with the Scottish Government, local authorities and public sector partners to strengthen preventative approaches. Scotland has world leading rights frameworks for people experiencing homelessness. Both public sector and voluntary sector services which are effective in preventing homelessness must be adequately resourced to close the implementation gap between our world-leading housing legislation and the outcomes that are currently delivered. Furthermore, our work with the Scottish Government Task and Finish Group on homelessness prevention has made robust recommendations that legal duties on public bodies to prevent homelessness are needed to improve outcomes for vulnerable people. The Housing Bill currently before the Scottish Parliament is a historic opportunity to enact these.

# WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

A public health approach to homelessness prevention is necessarily a national endeavour. We cannot deliver such an approach on our own and nor would we wish to. Our thinking in the development of this strategy draws heavily on approaches set out by the Scottish Government and COSLA in the **Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan** and **Prevention Review Group**, as well as the recommendations of the **Christie Commission** and the **Independent Care Review**. Our strategy has not sought to increase the number of services we deliver or expand our areas of operation, rather, we are focussing during this three year period on increasing the depth and quality of our work, strengthening our relationships and influence in the areas where we already work, and strengthening our financial sustainability in a difficult external financial climate.

Preventing homelessness saves lives and it saves money. During this time of significant downward pressure on public sector budgets we will continue to demonstrate and evidence the positive human impact and sound financial sense of preventative spend.







## REFLECTIONS ON 2024

Our move in April 2024 to a multi-year rolling strategic plan began with locating all our services within the Public Health Approach framework of prevention, early intervention and support into a home outlined above. This has given us a strong overarching narrative for the wide range of areas of work we are involved in, with each service having a clear understanding of how their work contributes to the mission of the whole organisation.

We have publicly supported the Scottish Government's proposals to use the Housing Bill to introduce new legal duties to "Ask and Act" on public bodies. By listening to the experiences of those we support we have been able to articulate the culture change that will be necessary across sectors to ensure that opportunities to provide support that can prevent people becoming homeless are not missed.

We are working with the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Government and public sector partners to highlight current best practice and the important role of voluntary sector services working with the public sector to maximise the positive impact of the new legal duties and the need for adequate resources to ensure their success.

In 2024 we commissioned **new research** which quantified the average cost to Edinburgh City Council of supporting someone who presents as homeless in to settled accommodation compared with the cost of providing support which allows them to maintain their tenancy. The research demonstrated conclusively that spending money on prevention is the fastest, most effective and cheapest way to address the housing emergency. We began work with Public Health Scotland as a key partner in our mission. We are collaborating on what it would mean to see Homelessness Prevention accepted across Scotland as a Public Health Issue.



Our message from 2024 and beyond is this; the journey into homelessness begins in many places and for many reasons. We need more houses but we cannot simply build our way out of homelessness. Homelessness is predictable and that means it is preventable. The right support at the right time, can keep people in their homes – which is a far better outcome than being forced to present as homeless, both for the individual and for the public sector. The best way to end homelessness is to stop it from happening in the first place.



# OUR STRATEGIC AIMS

Our strategy to take a public health approach to homeless prevention sets out four strategic aims, and our success indicators allow us to measure our progress against our strategic plan:

## We will prevent homelessness using a Public Health Approach

- We are delivering services which focus on: Prevention, Early Intervention, and Support into a Home
- We know how many people we are supporting each year and the difference this makes
- Our policy, participation, and influencing work contributes to a better understanding of homelessness as a Public Health Issue among local and national government, our service delivery partners and the funding community

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

- We are focussed on the things we can do well, strengthening and developing our services
- We have a culture of data, professional knowledge and lived experience informing our decision making and policy influencing priorities
- Our data is supported by storytelling that demonstrates the transformative impact of our work

## We will deliver whole person, whole family and whole community interventions

- We take a relationship based, values-led approach to providing inclusive, quality support.
- Our services are working collaboratively to provide person-centred support, and we can identify a variety of support journeys through Cyrenians for those we support
- A community of volunteers are supporting our work, and their role has a positive impact on their lives and the work of Cyrenians

## **We will be an organisation which nurtures its people and is financially and environmentally sustainable**


- We engage, develop and support our people to maintain their wellbeing, achieve their goals, and progress their careers within Cyrenians
- Our organisation is financially stable with a plan in place to sustain this position into the future
- We have a shared organisational income strategy with achievable goals
- We have a consistent approach to analysing and reporting risk across the organisation
- We act to reduce our environmental impact



# GET IN TOUCH

If you would like to find out more about our work, how we can work together or how you can support us, please get in touch:

## General enquiries:

-  57 Albion Road, Edinburgh, EH7 5QY
-  0131 475 2354
-  [admin@cyrenians.scot](mailto:admin@cyrenians.scot)
-  [cyrenians.scot](http://cyrenians.scot)




## For media and press enquiries:

-  [press@cyrenians.scot](mailto:press@cyrenians.scot)

## For Partnership, fundraising or volunteering enquiries:

-  [fundraising@cyrenians.scot](mailto:fundraising@cyrenians.scot)

## Social media:

-  @cyrenians
-  @cyrenians
-  @cyrenians.bsky.social



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