Gravesham Borough Council Interim Homelessness Strategy 2026/27

Cabinet Member Preface

Tackling homelessness is right at the top of our list of priorities.

We work with rough sleepers to find them safe places to stay, and those at risk of homelessness to prevent them finding themselves on the streets.

Those experiencing homelessness often have complex needs, including marked health inequalities, with life expectancy significantly lower than that of the general population. The absence of secure accommodation exposes people to violence, chronic stress and severe mental health difficulties.

Families in insecure housing face disrupted education, heightened anxiety and developmental challenges for children.

Dependence on emergency services, frequent attendance at accident and emergency departments, temporary bed-and-breakfast accommodation and the criminal justice system incurs considerably higher costs than the provision of suitable housing.

Secure accommodation provides a fundamental platform for finding work, managing chronic illness and rebuilding lives.

By tackling homelessness and the many factors that contribute to it, we can help build a better Gravesham community for all.

Councillor Karina O'Malley
Cabinet Member for Housing Services

Introduction

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local housing authorities to review and publish strategies every five years.

This interim strategy addresses all legal forms of homelessness, including rough sleeping. Hidden homelessness may be up to 12 times more common; women,

Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people and those aged 18–24 generally exceed rough sleeping numbers (Nationally). The Council has set priorities based on local and national context.

The Council will monitor this homelessness strategy through reporting to it's Management Team, with oversight and scrutiny provided through the Cabinet Member for Housing and reporting to the Housing Committee.

The Assistant Director (Communities & Inclusive Growth) and Head of Housing Solutions will ensure delivery and accountability of this strategy and action plan.

The Council has published this one year homelessness strategy and action plan and will publish a full five-year homelessness strategy and action plan in 2027, which will be reviewed and updated annually thereafter.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government's Homelessness Advice & Support Team has provided advice and support in the development of this strategy and action plan.

To support oversight, engagement and delivery a local homelessness forum will be re-established, with a Homelessness Reduction Board being established to increase commitment by and from those with a legal or pecuniary interest in tackling and reducing homelessness.

This homelessness strategy includes a short-term plan, involving key stakeholders and partners. This should strengthen delivery, improve services, tackle causes of homelessness and include diverse agencies and providers.

Objectives

This strategy and accompanying action plan present an interim plan for how Gravesham Borough Council will deliver its homelessness services across the next 12 months.

In December 2025, the Government published its National Plan to End Homelessness (A National Plan to End Homelessness - GOV.UK), detailing its strategy to create a better future for people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.

Gravesham Borough Council is committed to continuing to work to support the Government's National ambition to end rough sleeping and prevent homelessness across England, but where it cannot be avoided, that it is rare, brief and non-recurring.

This interim strategy focusses on three objectives:

- Preventing homelessness
- Increasing availability of accommodation
- Supporting those who are, or may be, street homeless

The actions set out within this strategy aim to deliver against those objectives by :

- Improving the quality, availability and access of free information and advice available to those who need it

- Preparing & improving robust processes and prevention initiatives to support people remain in accommodation, or obtain alternative accommodation

- Working to increase the availability and supply of temporary accommodation, such as through working with private landlords or exploring new accommodation options

- Supporting street homeless with specific housing and support needs and develop the 'whole' system response

Whilst the delivery of this work will be monitored through the 6 metrics specified by MHCLG and set out further in this report, local data and monitoring will be used to review and inform progress whilst we implement our 5 year strategy & action plan.

Stakeholders

The Council has developed, and will oversee ownership and delivery of this homelessness strategy.

Kent County Council, with responsibility for services including Adult Social Care, Children Services and Public Health will be required to provide reasonable assistance with this homelessness strategy and actions. There are joint policies covering safeguarding, support services, and for securing accommodation and support for vulnerable adults, homeless 16 & 17 year-olds and care leavers.

Private registered providers, for example those who provide temporary and settled accommodation, will also assist the Council with this homelessness strategy.

Other public authorities will work towards the objectives of this homelessness strategy. Bodies with referral duties, for example the Prison Service, the Ministry of Defence and NHS Trusts have adopted joint policies which require them to have regard to such strategies. Other contributors include emergency services, health services and local authorities.

Non-profit voluntary organisations, including community support services, welfare, advice, housing, veterans, outreach, floating support, LGBT, faith and other bodies, contribute to this homelessness strategy through the provision of their services, regardless of local authority funding. Membership bodies like Homeless Link provide useful research.

Others, including schools, colleges, universities, private landlords, National Asylum Support Service providers, businesses, the public and those who have experienced homelessness, may also agree to work towards the objectives of this homelessness strategy and will be involved further in the engagement and opportunities as part of the wider review work to be undertaken in development of the five-year strategy.

Review of homelessness

A high-level review into the homelessness position in Gravesham and nationally has been undertaken to support the development of this interim strategy, with a further in-depth review to be undertaken as part of the development of the 5 year strategy.

This homelessness strategy covers all legally defined forms of homelessness, including street and hidden homelessness, illegal eviction, unsuitable accommodation, domestic abuse, leaving care or prison, and notices to quit.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is introducing a Local Outcomes Framework to enable outcomes-based measurement against national priorities led by councils. It will strengthen accountability and reflect joint delivery with partners. The Framework centres on priority outcomes guiding local government and partners, supported by a set of specific, defined metrics.

The priority outcome for homelessness and rough sleeping has an ambition statement to prevent and reduce homelessness and rough sleeping.

Local authorities and partners are expected to aim to end homelessness by reducing families and children in temporary accommodation, cutting severe homelessness and tackling rough sleeping.

These are reflected in the six metrics which focus on cohort, track temporary accommodation, prevention and relief duties, and rough sleeping. They aim to prompt change in practice to prevent and reduce homelessness and rough sleeping.

These metrics are set by MHCLG and will be monitored through the Local Outcomes Framework.

Metrics:

- Rate of households with children in temporary accommodation per thousand households
- Number of families in B&B over six weeks
- Percentage of duties owed where homelessness was prevented or relieved
- Percentage of duties owed where homelessness was prevented or relieved for households experiencing multiple disadvantage
- Number of people sleeping rough on a single night
- Number of people sleeping rough over the month who are long-term

A comparison of Gravesham's position against North Kent (Dartford, Gravesham, Medway towns), the South East, and England has been carried out for each of the metrics, utilising baseline data, as set out below:

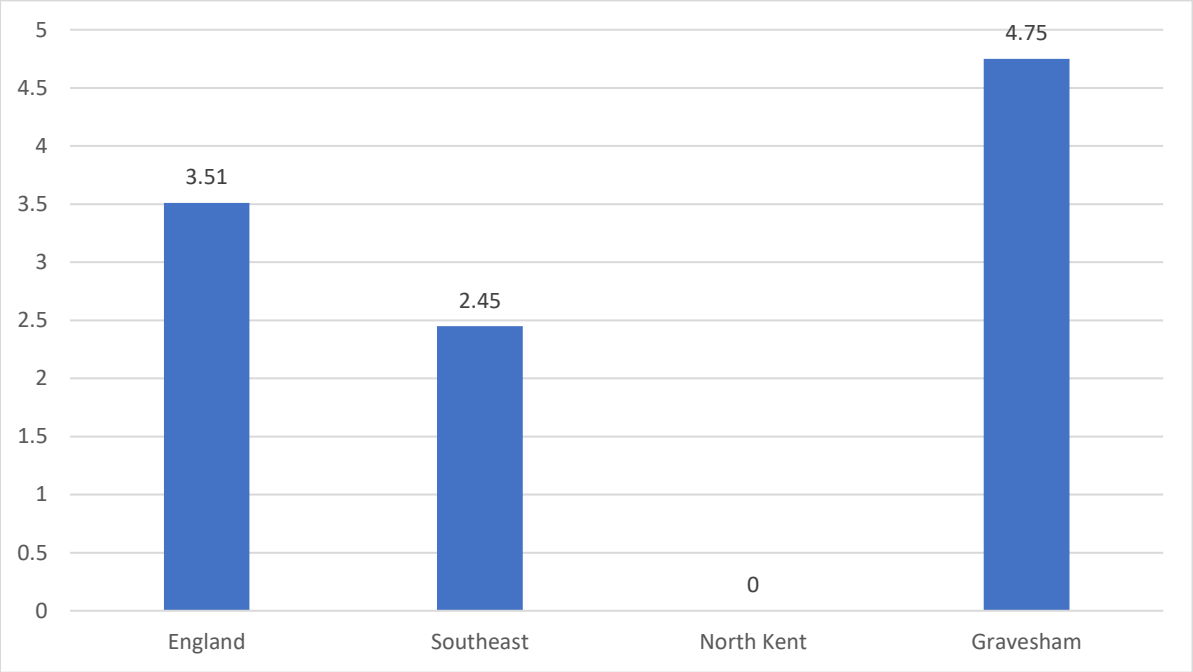
Homelessness and rough sleeping local outcomes baseline metrics

	England	South East	North Kent	Gravesham
Rate of households with children in temporary accommodation per thousand households (30 September 2025)	3.51	2.45	-	4.76
Number of families in B&B over six weeks (30 September 2025)	1,670	50	-	0
Percentage of duties owed where homelessness was prevented or relieved 1 (July to 30 September 2025	45.3	44.6%	52.0%	29.7%
Percentage of duties owed where homelessness was prevented or relieved for households experiencing multiple disadvantage (1 July to 30 September 2025)	34.4%	35.6%	52.8%	0.0%
Number of people sleeping rough on a single night (Autumn 2025)	4,793	797	22	8
Number of people sleeping rough over the month who are long-term (November 2025)	3,427	528	14	4

At 4.76, the rate of households with children in temporary accommodation on 30 June 2025, per thousand households in the population, secured by local authorities under their statutory homelessness functions, is higher in Gravesham than all comparative areas.

The rate for Gravesham was better than Medway Towns. No data was available for Dartford; therefore, no figure can be calculated for North Kent.

Households with children in temporary accommodation per thousand households, 30 June 2025.



	North Kent	Gravesham	Dartford	Medway Towns
Rate of households with children in temporary accommodation per thousand households	-	4.76	-	4.08

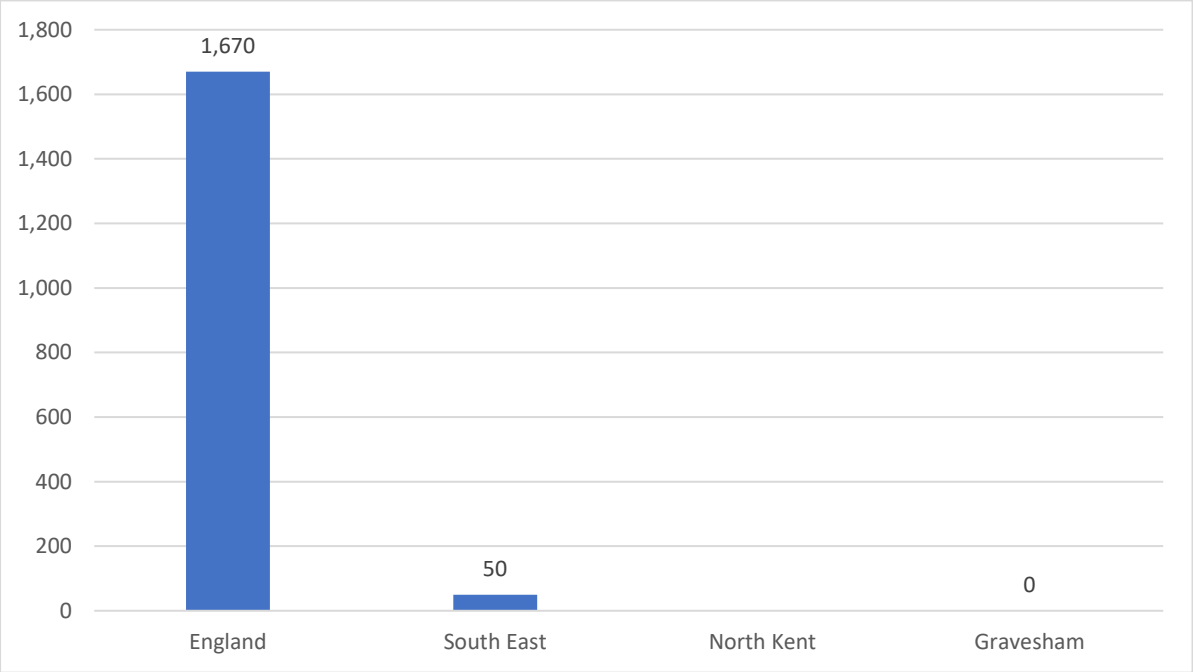
The latest statistics show there were 226 households with children in temporary accommodation, in Gravesham, on 30 June 2026.

	30 September 2025	30 June 2026	Change
Rate of households with children in temporary accommodation per thousand households	4.7	5.3	+ 0.5

At zero, the number of families in bed and breakfast accommodation who have been resident for more than six weeks on 30 June 2025, was lower in Gravesham than national and regional comparators and equal to the sub regional comparator. Legislation prohibits the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families except in an emergency and even then, for no longer than six weeks.

The number for Gravesham was equal to that for Medway Towns. No data was available for Dartford; therefore no figure can be calculated for North Kent.

Number of families in B&B over six weeks, 30 June 2025



	North Kent	Gravesham	Dartford	Medway Towns
Number of families in B&B over six weeks	-	0	-	0

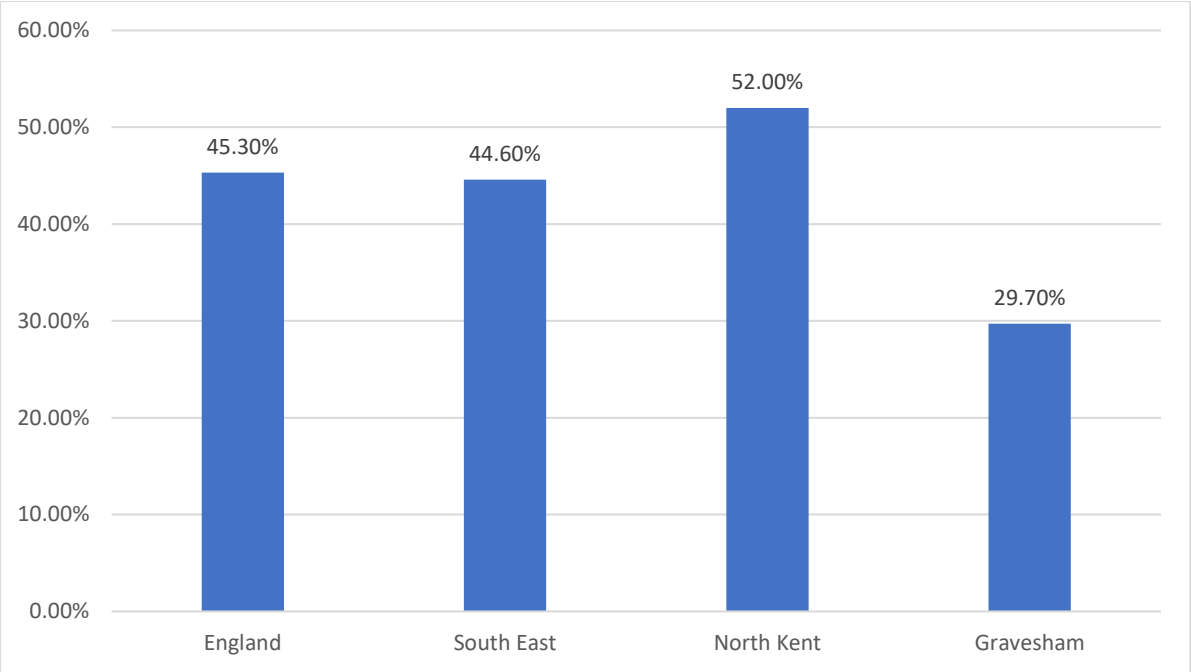
The latest statistics show no families in B&B over six weeks, in Gravesham, on 30 June 2026

	30 September 2025	30 June 2026	Change
Number of families in B&B over six weeks	0	0	0

At 29.7%, the percentage of successful outcomes at preventing or relieving homelessness in a quarter relative to the number of new prevention or relief duties owed that quarter, was lower than all comparator areas. Earlier prevention and relief when people first approach for support is more successful in other areas.

The percentage for Gravesham was lower than Dartford and Medway Towns.

Percentage of duties owed where homelessness was prevented or relieved, April to June 2025



	North Kent	Gravesham	Dartford	Medway Towns
Percentage of duties owed where homelessness was prevented or relieved	52.0%	29.7%	52.0%	58.2%

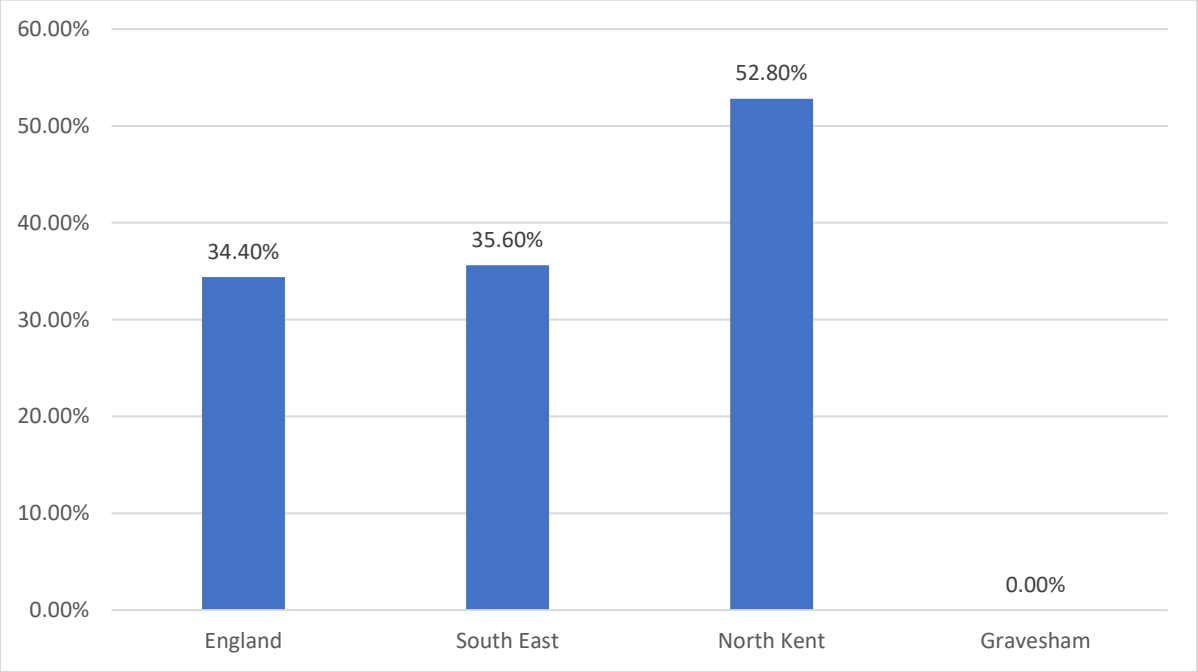
The latest statistics show 45 cases where homelessness was prevented or relived, in Gravesham, from 1 April to 30 June 2026.

	April to June 2025	April to June 2026	Change
Percentage of duties owed where homelessness was prevented or relieved	29.7%	24.7%	-5%

At 0%, the recorded percentage of successful outcomes at preventing or relieving homelessness for households experiencing multiple disadvantage in a quarter relative to the number of new prevention or relief duties owed that quarter, was lower than all comparator areas. Earlier prevention and relief when people experiencing multiple disadvantage first approach for support is more successful in other areas.

The percentage for Gravesham was lower compared to Dartford and Medway Towns.

Percentage of duties owed where homelessness was prevented or relieved for households experiencing multiple disadvantage, April to June 2025



	North Kent	Gravesham	Dartford	Medway Towns
Percentage of duties owed for households experiencing multiple disadvantage	52.8%	0.0%	81.8%	40.0%

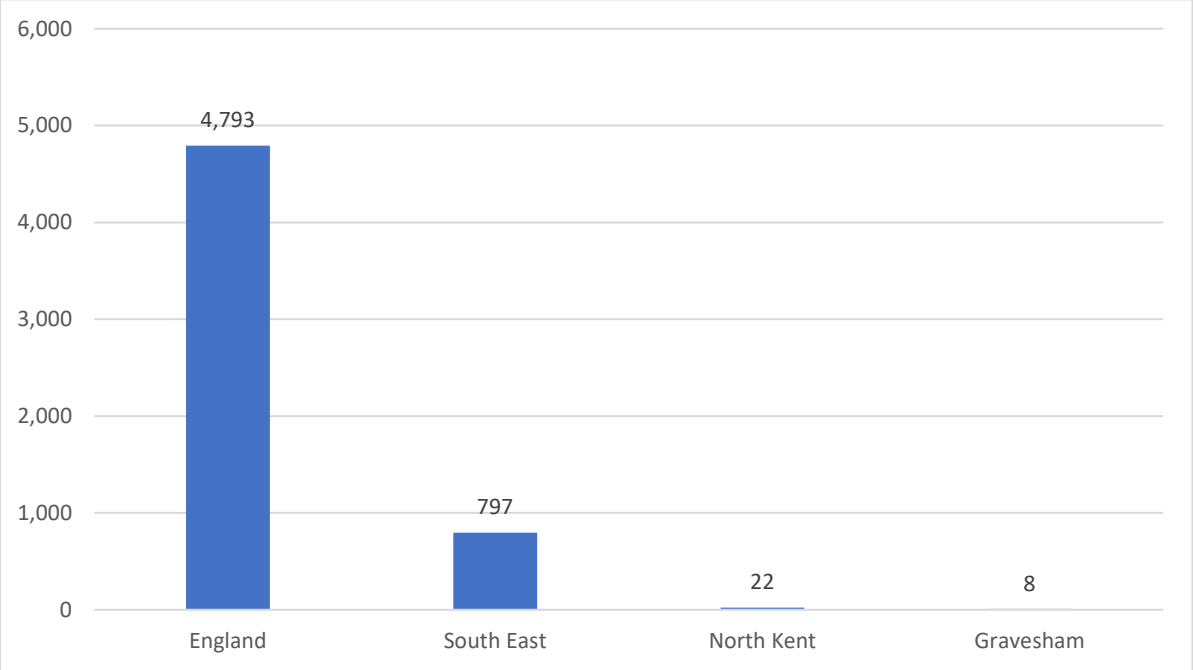
The latest statistics show tbc cases where homelessness was prevented or relived for households experiencing multiple disadvantage, in Gravesham, from 1 April to 30 June 2026.

	April to June 2025	April to June 2026	Change
Percentage of duties owed where homelessness was prevented or relieved	29.7%	tbc	tbc

At 8, the number of people sleeping rough on a single night between 1 October and 30 November 2025, is low in Gravesham. People sleeping rough are defined as people sleeping, about to bed down or bedded down in the open air and people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation. The definition does not include people in the hostels or shelters, people in campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes or organised protest, squatters or travellers. Bedded down means either lying down or sleeping. About to bed down includes those who are sitting in/on or near a sleeping bag or other bedding.

The number for Gravesham was higher than Dartford, but lower than Medway Towns.

Number of people sleeping rough on a single night, autumn 2025



	North Kent	Gravesham	Dartford	Medway Towns
Number of people sleeping rough on a single night	22	8	3	11

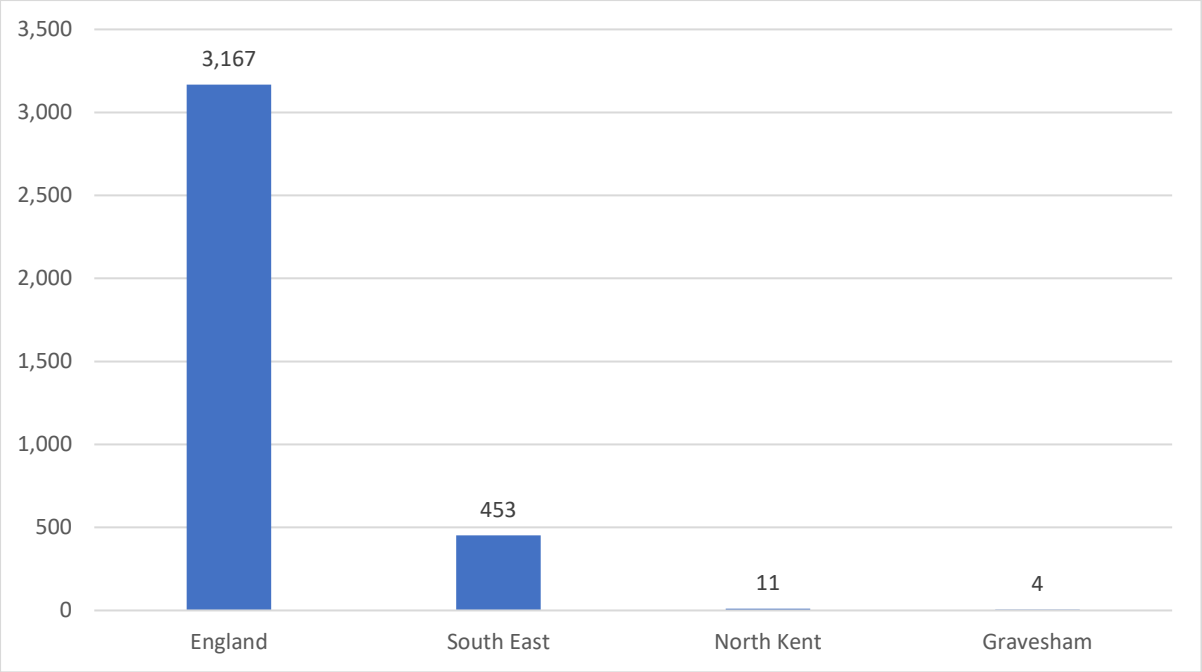
The latest statistics show 8 people sleeping rough on a single night, in Gravesham, in June 2026 (autumn 2026 statistic will be collected and reported on a date during October or November 2026).

	autumn 2025	June 2026	Change
Number of people sleeping rough on a single night	8	8	0

At four, the number of people sleeping rough over the course of the month who are long-term, is low in Gravesham. Long-term rough sleeping is defined as people seen within the reporting month who have been seen sleeping rough in three or more months out of the last 12 months. The number of people sleeping rough over the month is an estimated figure based on outreach contacts, and the same definition of rough sleeping as above is applied.

The number for Gravesham was equal to that for Dartford but lower than Medway Towns.

Number of people sleeping rough over the month who are long-term, November 2025



	North Kent	Gravesham	Dartford	Medway Towns
Number of people sleeping rough over the month who are long-term	14	4	4	6

The latest statistics show six people sleeping rough over a month who are long-term, in Gravesham, in June 2026.

	November 2025	June 2026	Change
Number of people sleeping rough over the month who are long-term	4	6	+2

The conclusions from this review inform this homelessness strategy and priorities for targeting prevention, accommodation and support. The accompanying action plan sets out the objectives, actions, deadlines and resources required to deliver and achieve the outcomes.

Delivery

The Council has considered statutory guidance and objectives of housing allocations schemes and tenancy strategy with services reflecting the aims of this homelessness strategy including prevention, housing supply and support.

The Council has aligned its housing allocation scheme with this homelessness strategy, giving reasonable preference to persons who are homeless or owed a homelessness duty. Any future changes made to our housing allocation scheme will have regard to the priorities of this homelessness strategy.

The Council shall align this homelessness strategy with its tenancy strategy.

The Assistant Director (Communities & Inclusive Growth) and Head of Housing Solutions will be responsible for overseeing delivery of this strategy and action plan; engaging appropriate stakeholders and delivery partners. Lead Officers have been identified within the action plan. Task and finish groups, forums and service user panels may be formed.

Updating this Homelessness Strategy

The Council typically publish a homelessness strategy at least every five years, following a review. Earlier publication may occur due to local government structural changes or significant legislative changes.

The Council will revise this homelessness strategy with evidence, driven by priorities, research and legislation before the end of 2027. There will be an annual re-publication of the action plan, to show progress and increase accountability.

Action Plan 2026-2027

Objective One: Prevent homelessness.				
Performance measures.	1. Percentage of duties owed where homelessness was prevented or relieved. 2. Percentage of duties owed where homelessness was prevented or relieved for households experiencing multiple disadvantage.			
Actions	Resources required	Lead officer	Timescale	Progress
Improve the availability and quality of free Information and advice on (i) preventing homelessness, (ii) finding accommodation, (iii) rights and duties, (iv) help available and (v) how to access it.	Funding for software licencing.	Housing Options Manager	March to May 2027.	In Progress.
Review and revise procedures for homelessness prevention initiatives that help people remain in existing accommodation or obtain alternative accommodation	Staff resource to formulate and amend procedures.	Housing Options Manager	June to August 2027.	Not started yet.

Objective Two: Ensure that accommodation is or will be available for people who are or may become homeless.				
Performance measures.	1. Rate of households with children in temporary accommodation per thousand households. 2. Number of families in B&B over six weeks.			
Actions	Resources required	Lead officer	Timescale	Progress
Make best use of alternatives to temporary accommodation, such as (i) private rented sector, (ii) supported housing and (iii) social housing allocations. Explore how to innovate accommodation supply for example via (i) existing buildings (ii) development of new temporary accommodation (iii) additional modular construction and other identified initiatives.	Revenue funding to establish new schemes required. Officer resource to revise existing schemes and/or, establish new schemes. Officer resource to lead supply programme.	Housing Options Manager GBC Lettings Manager Head of Housing Solutions & GBC Lettings Manager	December 2026 to May 2027. June to November 2027.	Not started yet. Not started yet.

Objective Three: Provide support for people who are or may become street homeless, or have been street homeless and need support to prevent them from becoming street homeless again.				
Performance measures.	1. Number of people sleeping rough on a single night. 2. Number of people sleeping rough over the month who are long-term.			
Actions	Resources required	Lead officer	Timescale	Progress
Establish a budget allocation for each person who is street homeless, to support meeting their specific housing and support needs. Improve the whole system response for people experiencing street homelessness, working local partner substance dependency, mental health, domestic abuse, and criminal justice agencies.	Revenue budget. Officer resource carry out the evaluation.	Rough Sleeping Partnership Manager . Rough Sleeping Partnership Manager	December 2026 to February 2027. September to November 2027.	Not started yet. Not started yet.