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## Southend Faces Homelessness Crisis Fueled by Evictions and Domestic Violence Surge

July 12, 2025

— Categories: Crime



With thousands on the waiting list and temporary accommodation costs soaring, Southend is confronting a homelessness emergency that is worsening by the day.

Evictions, domestic violence, and fractured family ties are driving more people onto the streets or into precarious living situations, creating a problem that demands urgent and substantial action.

Southend is experiencing a significant rise in homelessness, largely driven by increased evictions from private accommodation, domestic violence, and family or friend evictions, council officials reveal. The crisis has prompted the local authority to propose a £100 million, five-year investment plan to tackle the growing problem.

Olivia Westberg, head of housing policy and operations of Southend-on-Sea Council, explained that evictions from private rentals have steadily increased over recent years, contributing heavily to homelessness.

In addition, the council now has more responsibilities to support victims of domestic violence, leading to a growing number of people forced to flee abusive situations. Family or friend evictions, such as young adults no longer able to stay with relatives or unresolved relationship breakdowns, also play a major role in the rising figures.

At present, more than 1,600 individuals are on Southend's social housing waiting list, but only 382 homes became available last year. Many of these were subject to age restrictions, reducing the number of suitable properties for those in need.

## Crisis Deepens

Daniel Cowan, the council leader, described the current use of temporary housing as only the visible part of a deeper crisis.

Many people who do not qualify for temporary accommodation remain in insecure situations, such as sofa surfing or living in overcrowded family homes. He warned that tightening eligibility criteria over time has made it harder for vulnerable families to access support, and the official numbers do not capture the full scale of the issue.

The cost of temporary accommodation is expected to hit £2.5 million in 2024/25, double that of the previous year.

To address this, the council plans to establish a housing delivery board to oversee funding allocations, including a £10.5 million boost to the home acquisitions programme, £85 million for new build projects, and £4.5 million for a temporary accommodation development, which may include modular homes.

Funding will come from government grants, reserves in the council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA), and borrowing.

While this investment aims to alleviate pressures, it underscores wider problems, including affordable housing shortages and social challenges pushing people into homelessness.

Many families remain in precarious living arrangements, and strict eligibility rules leave many without adequate support.

Critics point to a lack of sufficient national policies protecting vulnerable groups, particularly victims of domestic violence and tenants facing eviction. The demand for social and emergency housing continues to place a heavy burden on local authorities.

Council leaders stress the importance of coordinated efforts, with the housing delivery board playing a key role in ensuring funds are used effectively to tackle both immediate housing needs and the underlying social causes.

Southend's homelessness crisis highlights the growing challenges faced by councils nationwide. Without stronger national frameworks and policies, local initiatives risk being overwhelmed by increasing demand and complex social issues.