



## **DRAFT – Chichester District Council Homelessness Strategy 2015 – 2020**

### **Introduction**

Chichester District Council's Homelessness Strategy 2015-2020 sets out the Council's priorities over the next five years. The conclusions and recommendations produced from the Homelessness Review are used to formulate the objectives for the Council over the next five years. Officers review the housing advice and homeless services every year to ensure that resources are deployed most effectively to the most vulnerable, in an effort to prevent homelessness and assist any resident, in need, at the point of homelessness.

The Homelessness Strategy 2009 – 2014 set five key objectives:

- 1) Develop the tools to increase choice for customers and to prevent homelessness.
- 2) Assist households to resolve their housing issues.
- 3) Implement a policy framework that prioritises homelessness prevention.
- 4) Review the provision of temporary accommodation.
- 5) Ensure that appropriate support is available for vulnerable groups.

The Council remains committed to these core objectives, this strategy seeks to develop, deliver and work upon the successes of the last five years. The Review evidences the vulnerable client groups and where the gaps in service are.

Since the last strategy the sector has seen unprecedented welfare and housing reforms through the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and Localism Act 2011, which have had a significant impact on people in housing need and their ability to access and sustain suitable housing. Accordingly, the number of people eligible for homelessness services has increased and the statutory definitions of 'homeless' and 'priority need' have widened which in turn offers a statutory service to a greater number of homeless people.

The delivery of services has developed and changed dramatically to prevent homelessness and meet the needs of the changing customer base. The only consistent factor over the last five years has been with frontline staff. The Council has been fortunate to have a committed and loyal team who strive to deliver a high standard of advice and assistance.

## **Conclusions and recommendations from the Homelessness Review 2015**

Residents of the District who seek the assistance from both voluntary and statutory services experience episodes of homelessness for a variety of reasons. The Review conclusions reflect causes of homelessness to be entrenched not only in the District but replicated across West Sussex.

The Review identifies that over a quarter of homelessness in 2009 through to 2014 is attributed to:

- households being required to leave accommodation that was held under licence from a relative or friend usually until they can secure their own home, or;
- the termination of private rented accommodation.

The shortage of affordable accommodation in either the social or private sector combined with high property prices has reduced the ability of residents to resolve their housing circumstances before they reach crisis. In addition, the change in the economic climate, significant welfare reforms and an overall shortage of available and good quality accommodation has made it increasingly difficult to prevent homelessness, rendering the applicant reliant on the Council to assist them to secure a housing solution.

Housing Benefit claimants were vulnerable to and at an increased risk of homelessness due to the introduction of the Benefit Cap and the Spare Room Subsidy withdrawal. A joint assertive intervention programme with the Housing Benefit team proved beneficial in reducing the number of claimants affected, getting claimants into work and rehousing claimants before their current home became unaffordable. The continuation of this approach to managing the anticipated changes in benefit entitlement is imperative to prevent homelessness.

Whilst the presentation of rough sleepers to the Local Authority has increased since 2009 the majority do not approach the Council for assistance. The intelligence the Rough Sleepers Panel establish on a monthly basis enables the group to identify the needs of the individuals and devise a planned approach to assisting them off the streets whether that be via a statutory or voluntary route.

The prevalence of rough sleeping in the district is a significant concern, the district has both a transient and entrenched group of rough sleepers that a single resource or solution will not resolve. The Council is committed to end rough sleeping in the district and will actively participate and work in partnership with internal and external agencies to achieve this ultimate aim.

Those most at risk of becoming homeless is equally split between those with dependent children and those without. Those with dependent children will always receive emergency accommodation at the point of homelessness because there is a statutory duty obligating the Council to do so. Those who are most vulnerable to

rough sleeping or sofa surfing are single homeless people with over 45% being under 40.

The Council is committed to delivering a range of practical options to assist anyone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness whether the provision is a statutory or otherwise. In order to deliver a range of solutions the Council acknowledges the need to work in partnership with other services and agencies to achieve the common aim.

Social housing offers tenants security of tenure, lower than market rent levels and good quality housing. The district currently has approximately 7,700 socially rented homes. In 2014 the Homemove scheme let a total of 486 properties which housed 18% of the applicants registered on Homemove. The housing register is a long term solution to residents housing need and so in the short term the Council and its residents are reliant on alternative options, predominantly, the private rented sector.

Securing accommodation in the private sector is less attractive to residents in housing need given the lack of security and its location; with the majority of affordable private rented accommodation being situated in the very south of the district approximately 10 miles from the city centre.

The Government's plan to extend the right to buy to housing association tenants is likely to see social housing stock reduce, even when taking account of future development plans.

With fewer resources the Council needs to concentrate its efforts on maximising the access to, and availability of, affordable accommodation in the private rented sector. The Council demonstrated that it is committed to this priority in 2012 when it invested resources into the internal social letting agency 'Homefinder.'

The plan below details how the Council intends to tackle all these identified issues by taking action on each of the five key objectives.

## Action plan

	Objective	Action	Lead
1	<b>Develop the tools to increase choice for customers and to prevent homelessness.</b>		
a	Continue to develop a wider range of prevention options that meet the needs of individual customers.	Minimise the impact of welfare reform by formulating interventions for the decrease in the Benefit Cap	Housing Options Manager  Housing Benefit Manager  Registered Providers
		Minimise impact by formulating interventions in the event that the Spare Room Subsidy withdrawal is increased.	Housing Options Manager  Housing Benefit Manager  Registered Providers
		Continue joint working with Registered Providers to manage under occupation with customer events and other activities.	Housing Options Manager  Registered Providers
		Deploy assertive outreach interventions to engage with residents threatened with homelessness but not approaching services for advice and assistance.	Housing Options Manager

		Minimise impact by formulating interventions for claimants affected by Universal Credit.	Housing Options Manager  Housing Benefit Manager  Registered Providers
		Organise interventions for homeowners at risk of homelessness in the event that the interest rates rise and mortgages become unaffordable	Housing Options Manager
		Develop the internal letting agency Homefinder to increase access to the private rented sector.	Homemove Manager
b	Maximising the effective use of existing stock and work with our Registered Provider partners to increase the provision of new affordable homes.	Facilitate good working relationships and manage consistency with the application of the Allocation Scheme with all Registered Providers through the Registered Providers Forum.	Homemove Manager  Registered Providers
		The Housing Strategy 2013-2018 identifies the Council's housing delivery plan and priorities. Utilise the outcomes from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment to influence developers to ensure that the supply of new affordable homes meets the needs of local people.	Housing Enabling Manager  Housing Options Manager  Housing Operations Manager
c	Maximising the potential of the private rented sector through the Homefinder scheme and Access PRS.	Ensure that the benefits of the Homefinder scheme are competitive with high street agents	Homemove Manager
		Formulate interventions for the introduction to Universal Credit	Homemove Manager
		Make effective use of the Council's Tenancy Sustainment Officer.	Homemove Manager

		Utilise Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) where possible.	Housing Options Manager
		Work with Southdown Housing Association to further develop the AccessPRS scheme and provide office accommodation for its officers.	Housing Options Manager Southdown Housing Association
d	Ensure the housing needs of young people and care leavers are met.	Continue to work in partnership with WSCC to retain the Youth Prevention Team service that manages the homelessness of 16 and 17 year olds.	WSCC Managers Housing Options Manager
e	Develop a protocol for working with care leavers to prevent homelessness.	Actively contribute to the countywide Customers Bouncing Back (CBB) group.	Housing Options Manager
f	Ensure that ex-offenders have access to housing advice prior to, and on, release.	Regularly attend and contribute to Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangement meetings (MAPPA).  Maintain working relationships with The National Probation Service's Housing Co-ordinator.	Housing Options Manager  Housing Options Manager

	Objective	Action	Lead
2	<b>Assist households to resolve their housing issues.</b>		
a	Reduce rough sleeping to as close to zero as possible.	Adopt a No Second Night Out Model.	Housing Options Manager
		Participate in Sussex-wide Sussex Homeless Outreach Connections and Engagement (SHORE) initiative.	Housing Options Manager
		Attend MAPPA and Integrated Offender Meetings.	Housing Options Manager

		Carry out annual rough sleeper estimates and/or counts.	Housing Options Manager
		Continue to manage the Rough Sleepers Panel.	Housing Options Manger
		Manage the hospital discharge protocol.	Housing Options Manager
b	Sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness.	Maintain housing support services including MyKey, Richmond Fellowship, Stonepillow and Think Family.	MyKey and Richmond Fellowship, Stonepillow Team Manager  WSCC and CDC Community Interventions Manager
		Make effective use of the Council's Tenancy Sustainment Officer.	Homemove Manager
c	Make effective use of existing social housing within the district of Chichester, including supported housing.	Review Allocations Scheme as appropriate.	Homemove Manager

	Objective	Action	Lead
3	<b>Implement a policy framework that prioritises homelessness prevention.</b>		
a	Ensure the Allocations Scheme is fair and lawful.	Update the Allocations Scheme to accommodate changes in priorities and legislation.	Homemove Manager

b	Ensure that the right supply of homes meets the needs of local people.	Utilise the evidence from Strategic Housing Market Assessment to influence the planning process and developers to provide a sufficient number of new homes with a mix to meet the needs of local people.	Housing Enabling Manager  Housing Operations Manager
c	Ensure that homelessness and housing advice services continue to meet the needs of those in housing need.	Continue to review annually the homelessness and housing advice services.	Housing Options Manager

	Objective	Action	Lead
4	<b>Review the provision of temporary accommodation.</b>		
a	Prioritise void accommodation to applicants under s.192 Housing Act 1996.	Develop a temporary accommodation service with support for single homeless applicants using void temporary accommodation stock.	Housing Options Manager
		Develop a temporary accommodation service with intensive support for rough sleepers using void temporary accommodation stock.	Housing Options Manager
b	Ensure the use of temporary accommodation is financially efficient.	Offer the use of void and unrequired temporary accommodation stock to other West Sussex Local Authorities, voluntary agencies and/or West Sussex County Council.	Housing Operations Manager
		Review financial management and budgeting processes, including a review of the rent structure.	Housing Operations Manager
c	Make effective use of the temporary accommodation resources.	Undertake a review of the use of 1 Westward House.	Housing Options Manager
d	Minimise the number of households in temporary accommodation.	Deliver a pro-active support service to households in temporary accommodation to continue addressing their housing needs.	Homemove Manager

	Objective	Action	Lead
5	<b>Ensure that appropriate support is available for vulnerable groups.</b>		
a	Continue working with partner agencies.	Actively contribute to the SHORE sub-groups that consider funding applications for single homeless people services.	Housing Options Manager
		Assist West Sussex County Council with the delivery of the Housing Related Support Programme.	Housing Operations Manager  Housing Options Manager
		Maintain good working relationships with Think Family, Southdown, Stonepillow and the Richmond Fellowship who provide support service to vulnerable groups.	Housing Options Manager
b	Ensure that housing knowledge is shared with existing partners to up-skill support services.	Offer and deliver training and/or presentation opportunities to partner agencies.	Housing Options Manager
c	Ensure that households fleeing violence are offered appropriate support services and advice.	Maintain good working relationships with WORTH Service and the National Centre for Domestic Violence.	Housing Options Manager