

Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2025

Summary of Consultation Activities

1. Background

As part of the development of the strategy and in addition to the Task and Finish Group with Members a range of consultation activities were undertaken with service providers, external partners, staff and service users. This document summarises the results of those activities and the broad themes that arose as part of the process. Many of these themes have been incorporated into the action plan, either as a direct action or for further exploration.

2. Key Themes

During the consultation activities several themes emerged, often from more than one source, they can best be summarised as follows:

- Tenancy sustainment and preventing homelessness from occurring.
- Affordability of affordable homes, both in terms of building and long-term running costs for residents.
- Balancing design and place making costs against the provision of affordable homes.
- The impact that delays in planning have on the viability of a scheme.
- The importance of face-to-face contact in dealing with homelessness, access to the internet and data management.

In response to these concerns several key action points have been included or will be added to the operational service delivery plan which will sit behind the action plan in the strategy. Both the strategy and action plan will be publicly available, and the operational service delivery plan will be an internal plan for operational service delivery and improvement purposes.

3. Service Users

To gain feedback from service users we surveyed 20% of those households on the housing register, which were randomly selected from each of the priority bands. They were asked to complete a brief survey which focused on their experience around joining the housing register and seeking the assistance they required.

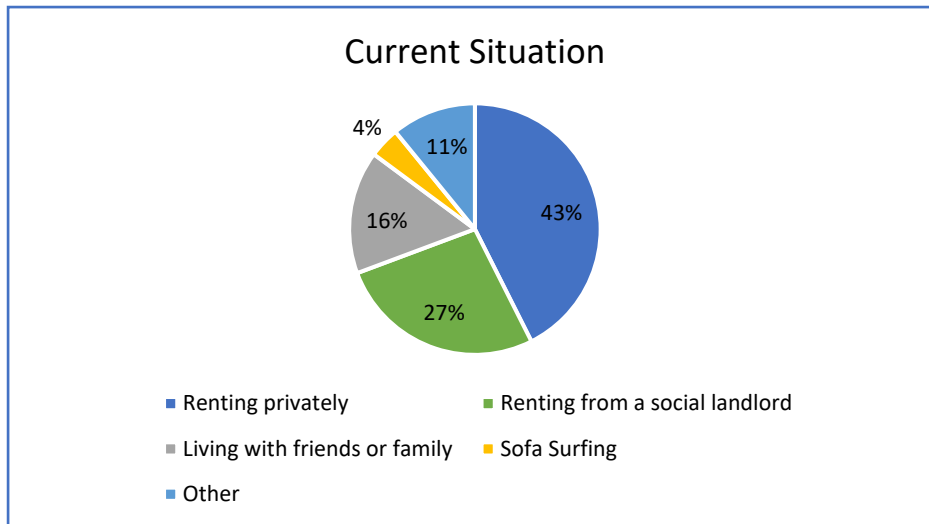
In addition, we also undertook a separate survey with those currently experiencing homelessness and/or living in temporary accommodation.

Housing Register

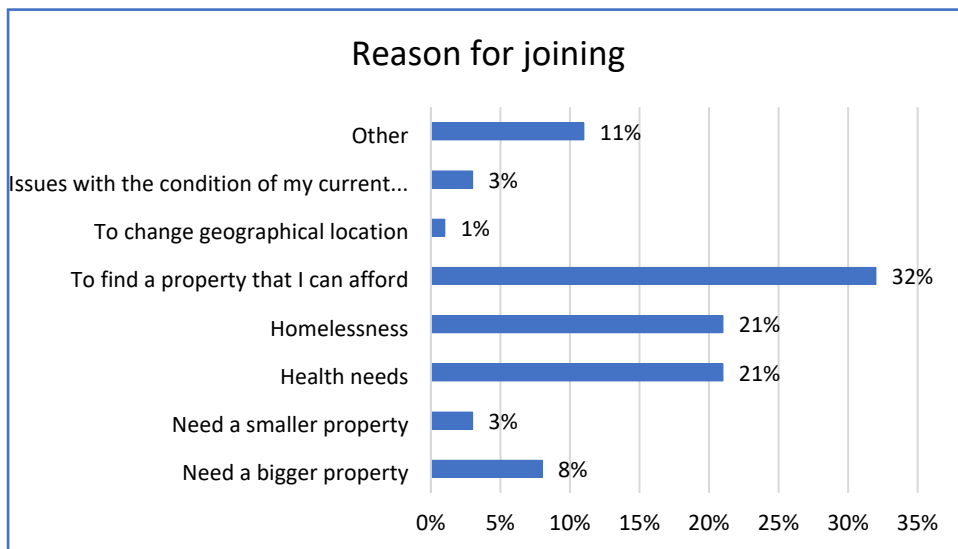
A total of ninety-six responses were received which represents a response rate of 22%, however, not everybody responded to every question.

The majority of those responding (43%) were currently renting privately.

Appendix 3



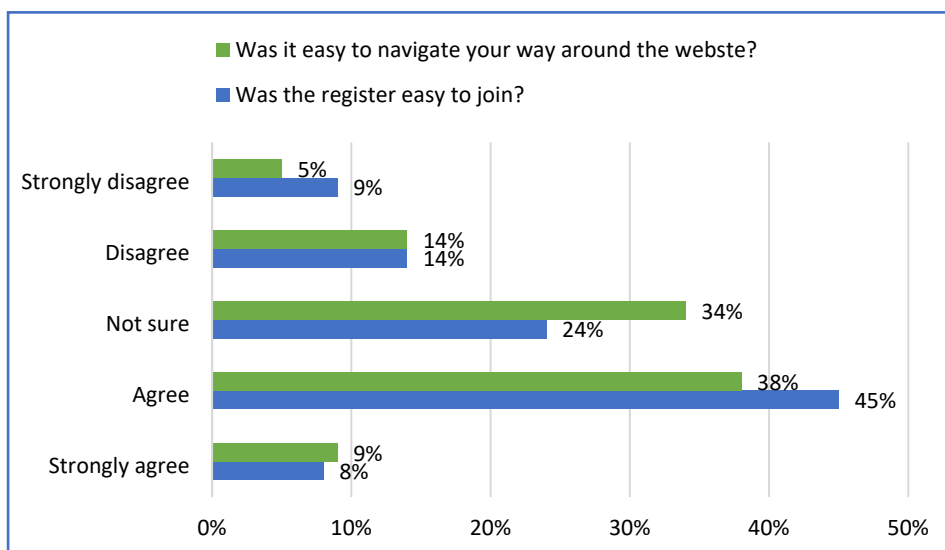
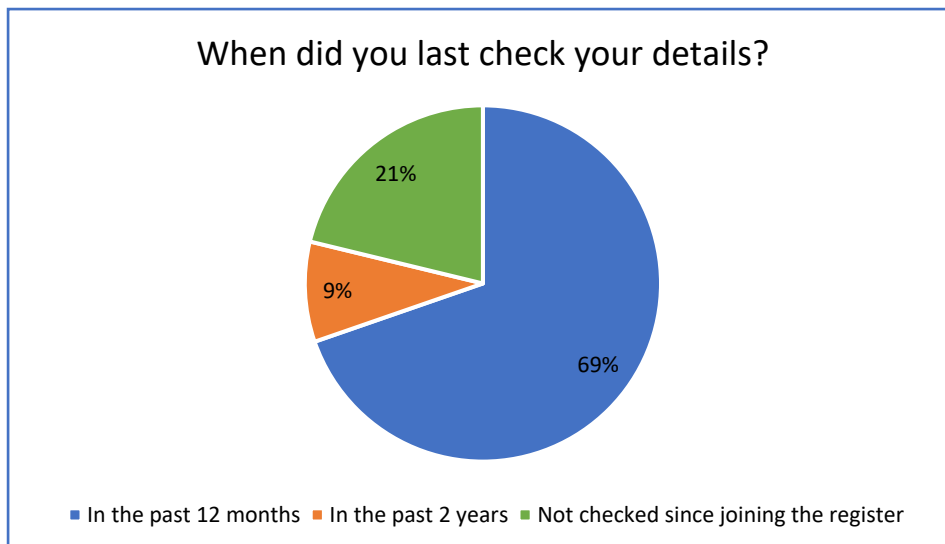
When asked what their main reason for joining the register was 32% cited affordability issues.



Response rate: seventy-five responses

“I am at the age where I should be in a property suitable for a long term where I can set it up to live comfortably rather than living in a rental property that I am not too sure about the time period; I can be checked out of here tomorrow”.

We asked respondents for feedback on the suggestion of introducing a requirement for applicants to check and update their details on an annual basis. Most felt this was a reasonable and fair approach, although there were some comments about access to IT equipment for those who were homeless.



Some of the comments we received from this survey were mirrored by service providers who also raised the issue of data sharing and the anxiety that can be caused by having to provide the same information to several different agencies, particularly if someone is having to relive traumatic circumstances.

“I was surprised out how extremely difficult the application process was. Especially since we as a family already claim universal credit, surely all of the background/identity checks and personal information is already in “the system”. Why are these services not all linked to prevent duplication of all these processes? As an educated person I worry that this whole process might be very overwhelming to some, and either put them off completing or even cause mistakes to happen in the process.”

“My paperwork was in office for several weeks before being assessed and I was asked for same thing more than once”

“There was a lot of back and forth asking for information that was already provided”

We also asked people to tell us if they experienced any issues when joining the register or if

there was anything else we could do to make the experience better.

“I felt during the whole process that employees assumed I understood the processes, the ins and outs, the different things I could/should apply for. This is probably the case if you have family or friends who have done this process, but if you don’t then so much of this is completely alien. Employees shouldn’t assume it is all obvious to those applying”.

“I have received nothing but genuine consideration and even kindness. I am so grateful”.

“Allow a message to housing officer section on Homemove and allow us to manage our account properly (update name, phone etc.) as it never works”.

“Have a dedicated officer to be in contact and see if we are ok and got everything we need”.

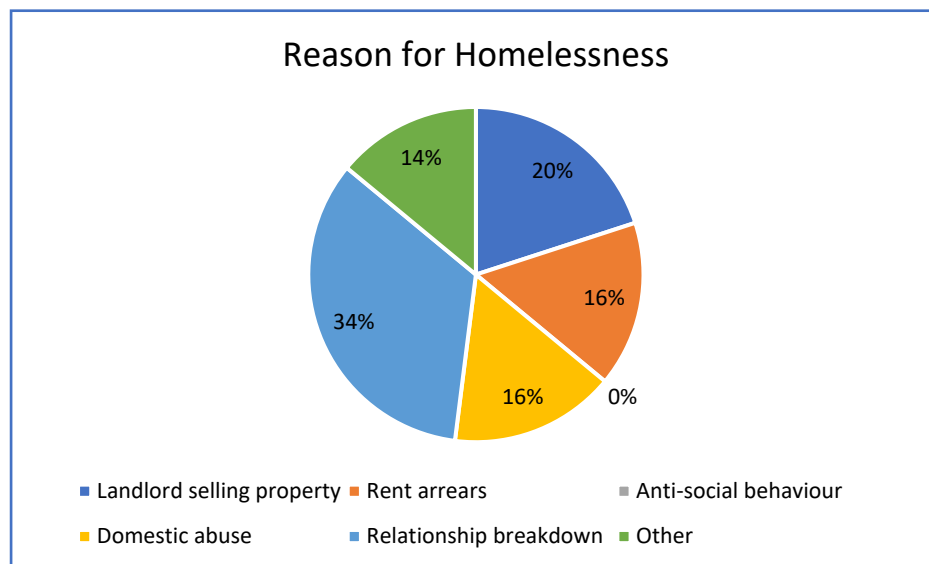
“Not everything is written in a text book life isn’t like that - I felt every step of registering was so hard it broke me down all in all rather than helping a disabled pensioner. Chichester made problems rather than solved them it’s devastating to go through this”.

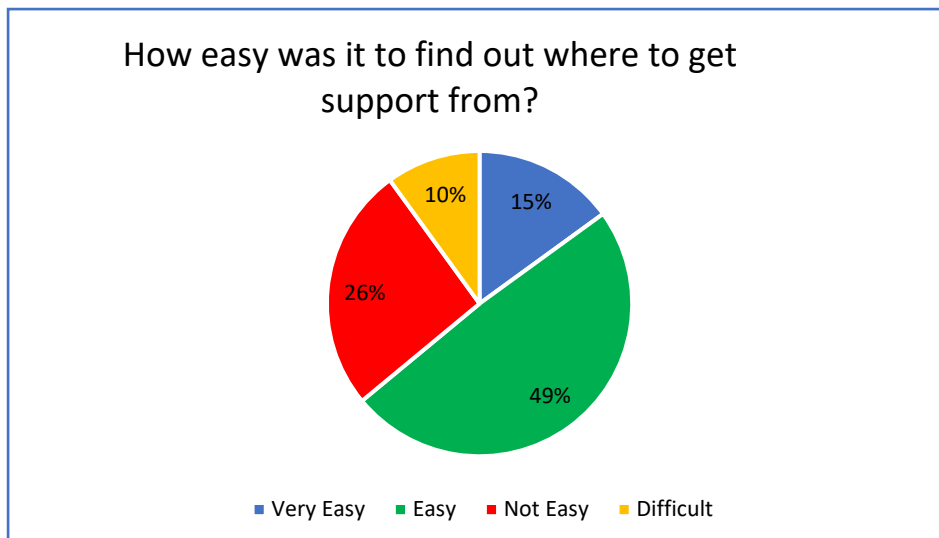
Some of these comments were reiterated by those currently homeless or living in temporary accommodation.

Lived Experience

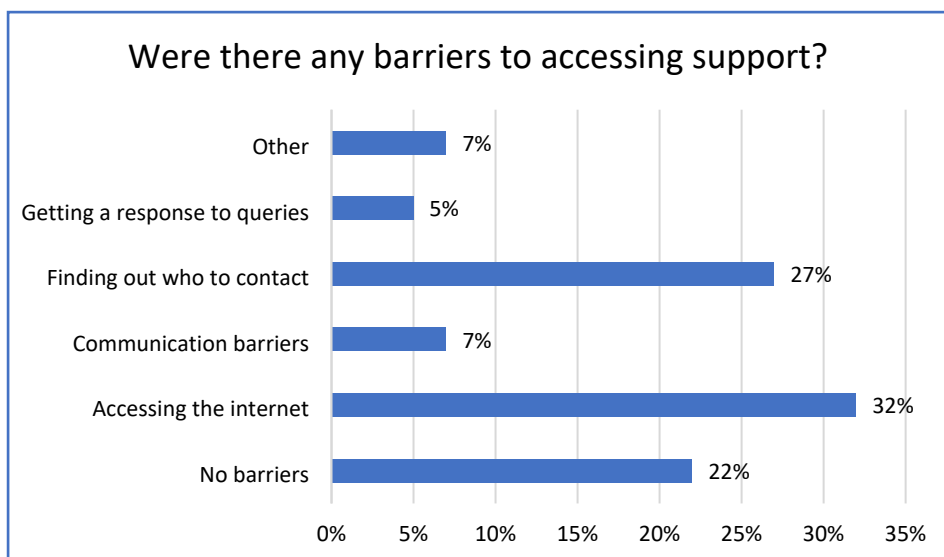
We asked those currently experiencing homelessness about the ease with which they were able to access support and advice and to tell us about any barriers they faced.

We carried out surveys with thirty-six people.





Although most people found it easy to find out where to get support from there were still some significant barriers to overcome. The biggest barrier was being able to access the internet when homeless and being able to directly contact a housing officer. There were several comments about not knowing where to go for food or shelter (particularly at the beginning of the process) but that once that help was secured there were lots of positive comments for the services provided by Stonepillow and Four Streets at the hub and breakfast service. Being able to talk to someone, rather than a screen, was important and this was also a key message from service providers.



When asked if there was anything we could do to make the process easier most of the comments related to having direct access to housing officers, either face to face or direct contact numbers, not having to repeat information and assistance with form filling. Whilst there was great praise for the outreach team there were requests for more staffing in this area.

'Ian and Lisa are amazing; Ian goes above and beyond by walking around and asking if you are ok. The support in Chichester is very good, there's always information available if you want via the hub and breakfast.'

90% stated that the next steps/option were clearly outlined to them when they accessed the service.

We asked people how confident did they feel in being able to maintain a new tenancy, 69% felt confident in doing so, however when asked about what concerned them the most, even those who felt confident would like to receive additional support with budgeting, the single biggest concern was being able to afford the rent, followed by being able to access support services.

Finally we asked for any additional comments.

'It's lonely, more human contact please'

'You feel alone at times, more forward facing please'

'it's hard being homeless don't look down on us'

'if you don't have a smart phone its hard accessing things'

4. Registered Providers Forum

We met with Registered Providers where several issues were raised and discussed:

Much of the feedback revolved around the barriers to working in Chichester, tenancy sustainment, affordability and legal constraints. A strong message coming forward was the cost of bringing forward affordable homes in Chichester, examples given were the environmental improvements and design elements that are required, whilst good design is welcomed it was felt that Chichester needed to be realistic and balance these with the affordability of bringing a scheme forward and a home being economical for those living in them. Some examples given included not taking on stock with gas, insisting on chimneys and open fireplaces and wooden porches which require long term maintenance.

A request to look at the supply of 1 bedroom accommodation and ensuring that they are well laid out and not overly concentrated in one area of a site, there was a preference for maisonettes over flats, they are cheaper to deliver, have less housing management issues and do not require service charges for the upkeep of communal areas.

There were several comments around the delays in planning process and the financial impact this has on a development, additional costs such as nitrates, water neutrality, A27 contributions and the delays these have caused, queries over CIL on 100% affordable schemes leading to further delays and the need for Deeds of Variation on some sites leading to further legal costs and more delays. It was felt that a greater understanding of land led, affordable schemes was required and a suggestion of a standard s106 template for such sites could be considered. The change in additionality was welcomed.

Most of the larger providers are working across multiple local authorities (27 in one case) Chichester is seen as more difficult to work with than others and more expensive so Boards will take the decision to work with other authorities over Chichester. Some of this is around design concepts, time it takes to secure planning and the recent issue of additionality which has now been resolved.

Space standards, there is no interest in working with developers who do not meet these, but also around the design of the property, some may meet the standard, but design and layout of rooms is poor.

Suggestions around tenancy support included pre-tenancy training to give people the greatest chances to maintain their tenancy, (particularly those in temporary accommodation) the need to lobby for greater support, not just those with specialist needs.

A suggestion to explore what it being done with those currently under occupying their properties.

Affordability remains a big issue, affordable rents are not affordable for many people, suggested move towards social rent, signs that Homes England are leaning in this direction. A request to stop splitting the rented element into affordable and social rents as this causes issues with neighbours, seek to deliver just social rent which will also help to promote a level playing field when it comes to bidding on s106 sites.

5. **Developers**

Discussions were held with developers who had some similar concerns to those raised by the registered providers, particularly around the length of time it takes to secure planning and the impact that this has on business models and viability. Land deals are often made 5/6 years beforehand which impacts on OMV and appointing a registered provider, would like to see a cascade in S106 agreements to give certainty in the event that an RP cannot be secured.

This point was re-enforced by others, although pleased that additionality has been resolved they now need to see a clear message around CIL on affordable homes.

Statement that affordable housing is important to them, it forms an integral part of their financial viability, it guarantees a % of homes are sold up front, provides an early income stream, improves cash flow and saves on costs (marketing, legal etc) Despite opinions to the opposite they are not trying to avoid providing the affordable element but require some certainty, particularly at the present time when providers are not bidding on s106. To assist with this, they would like to see a cascade provision in S106 agreements that provide an option for the developer and the Council. Deed of variations (DOV)'s are expensive and can take a long time to secure, adding more uncertainty and costs to a project.

Suggestion that CIL relief be outlined in the SPD Affordable Housing as its currently silent. There was a strong feeling that CDC pass on every cost to developers, for example, CIL, A27 Contributions, Design and Landscaping etc everything is stacking up and as a Council we need to decide what the payoff is, do we accept less affordable homes for higher levels of design and landscaping.

Estate service charges were also discussed, following feedback from registered providers, whilst the provision of play areas, sports pavilions offer a valuable contribution to local communities they must be balanced with the ongoing costs to maintain them. Likewise, ecology measures with 75-90 years monitoring requirement have additional cost elements attached to them and these costs are borne by the residents. Affordable homes are required to pay an equal amount of these costs and for, so these are beyond their means.

6. **Service Providers**

The clear message from those providing direct services and support to homeless people was prevention, prevention, prevention and ensuring that dedicated workers were available to work with people, not simply signposting people to other services. Discussion was also held about the lack of data sharing and the impact this has on client who are often asked to recount traumatic circumstances.

Intelligence gathering was seen as a crucial part of preventing homelessness and the need to look at other data sets, (water board and council tax tend to be the first bills to be stopped) visits to places like food banks which can be an early indicator of someone struggling.

7. **Employers**

Responses awaited and will be added.