East Hampshire District Council

**HOMELESSNESS AND   
 ROUGH SLEEPERS  
 STRATEGY**

**2019 – 2024**

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**Foreword**

The development of our new Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy comes at a time of great change in housing, welfare and social policy. There are continual pressures on housing and an affordability crisis in the area, which is likely to increase in future years.

The strategy is evidence based – a comprehensive review of homelessness has been carried out, and it has been developed in consultation and partnership with stakeholders.

This strategy sets out the issues that are specific to East Hampshire and considers the challenges and opportunities that will come forward in the next 5 years. It provides our priorities for future action.

It reinforces our commitment to support those facing homelessness in the district and builds on the excellent work carried out by our Housing team over the past few years, especially the last year following on from the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Many of the issues facing us are outside the direct control of the local authority. Nonetheless, we need to plan ahead, prioritise and propose actions to build on our past success, mitigate the impacts of changing housing markets, social and welfare reform and above all, prevent homelessness.

The strategy contributes to the Council’s overall vision to improve the welfare and wellbeing of all our residents. We believe the Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy and Action Plan will support our commitment to supporting and creating sustainable communities in East Hampshire.

**Councillor Julie Butler**, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Lead for Welfare and Community Integration

## Introduction

All local authorities are required to consider housing needs within their areas, including the needs of homeless households and have statutory duties to ensure that advice and assistance is available to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The strategy must apply to everyone at risk of homelessness, not just those considered to be in priority need. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has placed further duties upon councils to anyone approaching for assistance. Under the Homelessness Act 2002 Section 1, housing authorities are required to carry out a homelessness review and publish a strategy based on the review. A homelessness strategy is defined at S 3 (1) as one formulated to:

* Prevent homelessness in an authority’s area;
* Secure that accommodation is and will be available in that area for people wo are or may become homeless; and
* Provide support for such people or those who have been homeless and need support to prevent it reoccurring.

The new strategy aims to consolidate previous successes and measures and sets out not only what is required to maintain the service, but further develop it.

To achieve this objective, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been informed by a review of homelessness in the District. Consultation has taken place with officers, local stakeholders, service users and partner organisations. The strategy takes into account key local, regional and national issues and priorities.

The review identified the concerns and challenges that need to be addressed. These have been grouped under four main priority areas within the Action Plan with specific targets listed under each priority area:

***To ensure all our customers are provided with appropriate advice, assistance and support to enable them to address their housing needs and to lead independent lives*** *–* emphasis to be on early intervention, building on existing services and continually improving service delivery.

***Consider more sustainable housing solutions for those facing homelessness and on the Housing Register -****with the emphasis on reducing the use of B&B, placement outside the area, and taking the opportunity to be more creative and innovative*

***Prevent and Relieve homelessness by working in partnership with statutory and voluntary sector agencies to identify the threat of homelessness at the earliest opportunity, and work together to ensure appropriate support services are accessible.***

***To understand the needs and requirements of those rough sleeping and sofa surfing in the district and provide sustainable solutions***

The Council recognises that homelessness is a complex issue that encompasses and impacts upon health, employment, education, offending, finance, relationships and families and therefore in delivering this Strategy, the Council will work in partnership with a number of external agencies. East Hampshire District Council, alongside key partners and organisations has worked very hard to prevent homelessness and keep acceptances as low as we can, our annual performance figures reflect this. That said we recognise that the next few years will bring considerable challenges, and this will impact the number of households who will be seeking assistance and support from the Council.

**National Context**

The last few years have seen significant changes which are likely to impact on homelessness:

* Introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which has extended statutory responsibilities for local authorities to provide meaningful support to single people as well as extending prevention & relief duties for all eligible households.
* The overall rate of new housing provision is not keeping pace with household growth and is failing to reduce housing market pressures.
* Welfare reform continues to have an impact on those receiving benefits (lower benefit caps, Universal Credit and freezing of Local Housing Allowance rates).
* Cuts to local government funding including the Social Inclusion programme which was administered by Hampshire County Council
* The full impact of the United Kingdom’s decision to leave the European Union is hard to predict at this time.
* The Localism Act 2011 – shifting power from central government back into the hands of individuals, communities and local authorities.
* The increase in rough sleeping and the government’s Rough Sleeper Strategy to end rough sleeping.

**Local Context**

The East Hampshire District Council area, with a population of 119,392, is a desirable place to live and work.  It lies in the south and eastern part of Hampshire.  East Hampshire and the South Downs National Park which covers part of the District will achieve lower growth in terms of housing and commercial development.

There are a number of key issues facing the Council. These include:

* An ageing population with 23% of residents above the age of 65.
* Outmigration of the workforce with 25,712 commuting out of East Hampshire compare to 15,505 in-commuting.
* Property values 31% above that of England and Wales in East Hampshire
* Land values in East Hampshire at circa £6m per hectare, which is well above the average in England (ex. London) which stands at circa £2.8m per hectare
* House price to earnings ratios above the national average
* Plan for a minimum 10,456 additional new homes between 2017 and 2036 (the life of the draft East Hampshire Local Plan)
* Decreasing ability to secure accommodation private rented sector due to high rents.

**New Homes**

The Council has challenged itself to provide a ‘front door for everyone’, whilst ‘improving people’s lives’, through the delivery of the draft Local Plan 2017-2036. The Local Plan seeks to address the issues facing the Council by providing homes and jobs whilst enhancing the area’s character and natural and built environment. In order to meet the housing need, as identified in the Council’s Housing and Economic Needs Assessment 2019 (HEDNA), the district requires the construction of an estimated 608 homes per annum.

All new development sites of at least 10 dwellings will be required to provide 40% affordable housing.   This percentage will, over time, see the 1,211 households registered on Hampshire Home Choice at October 2019 provided with a high-quality and affordable home of their own. The percentage also reflects the viability of new developments and is representative of a buoyant housing market, with average house prices in East Hampshire at £434,437 (2017). House price inflation continues to be strong in the area with East Hampshire seeing a 32% rise in property values between 2013-17, which is some 9% above increases in England and Wales over the same period. The Council supports Registered Providers operating within the Borough and nomination arrangements exist through Hampshire Home Choice. Affordable housing delivery has been substantial in recent years with 870 affordable homes being built over the 5year period 2014-19, compared to 375 in the preceding 5year period 2009-13.

Affordable housing is normally arranged in small clusters of no more than 10 homes around development sites, with the size, type and tenure being negotiated on a site by site basis to best reflect the housing needs of the area. Rented homes remain the priority tenure and it is expected that the affordable housing element on most developments will comprise 70% of rented housing with the remaining 30% as intermediate housing, under the expanded definition within NPPF2. The period 2014-19 has seen 583 rented homes built, which represents 67% of the total, compared to 287 (33%) intermediate homes built over the same period.

In East Hampshire the new homes are to be allocated into the main settlements of the District whilst acknowledging that 57% of the District is within the National Park boundary where there are naturally constraints on new development.  In the north of the district new homes will be concentrated in Alton, Whitehill and Bordon and the Four Marks areas, in the central part of the District in Petersfield and Liphook and in the south Clanfield, Horndean and Rowlands Castle.  The Local Plan continues to have a positive impact in delivering new homes with 799 market homes and 305 affordable homes built over 2018/19, well in excess of the 608 annual target required to meet the 2036 new homes target.

This strategy and action plan will remain ‘live’ documents and will be included in the new Corporate Strategy to form part of the Council’s policy framework - this will also include documents such as the Empty Homes Strategy (draft), Council Tax Empty Homes Premium policy (draft), Care Leavers relief scheme and the Welfare and Wellbeing Action Plan (draft).

**Current Position**

**East Hampshire District Council’s Housing Service provision**

The Housing Service comprises two teams – the Housing Development Team and the Housing Options and Advice Team. They are based at Penns Place Petersfield and provides housing advice and assistance to anyone who requires it free of charge.  This can be to someone who has an issue with their housing situation, or a provider who has an issue with an occupant of their accommodation.  Advice is not restricted by tenure and anyone, whether living at home with family/friends, in a private or social rented property or owner occupiers, are equally entitled to seek assistance.

The Housing Service also has a statutory responsibility to process homelessness applications and to determine what duties are owed with assisting those at risk of losing their homes.  In all cases, prevention is the preferred outcome, but where not possible, identifying alternative accommodation is the next step, and in some cases, the provision of temporary accommodation until a settled housing solution can be reached.

The local housing authority also has a statutory responsibility to maintain a housing register which it does by processing applications for social housing through assessing a households housing needs to determine what priority should be awarded when allocating accommodation.

The Council is a non-stock holding authority, the housing stock was transferred under LSVT (large scale voluntary transfer) to East Hampshire Housing Association, who later merged to form Radian. As we do not hold any housing stock it is vital that we work in partnership with registered social landlords who manage the social & affordable housing within this district to assist with the allocation of accommodation through Hampshire Home Choice, the sub-regional choice-based lettings scheme.

In addition to the housing options and advice provisions, the Housing Service is also responsible for ensuring the adequate provision of housing development within the district through its housing enabling and housing strategy roles.  It does this in close partnership with its planners, housing developers and registered providers.

**Access to the Housing Service**

Due to the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 the Council offers scheduled appointments for housing assessments and a drop-in facility for housing advice on Monday - Friday between 9:30 – 12:30. The Council also provides emergency housing advice for all households daily Monday – Friday 9:00 – 17:00. Given the rural nature of the district there is a lot of telephone traffic and the Council is currently working to capture data.

The Council is also obliged to ensure that an emergency service is provided outside of office hours which it does in partnership with Havant Borough Council.  Officers have a duty telephone line where enquiries are taken by referral from the Council’s Emergency Out of Hours Service. This service is 24/7 365 days a year.

**Structure**

Housing Options and Advice Team is currently staffed by a team of 1 full and 5 part-time (which equates to a team of 4 full time Housing Advisory Officers), managed by the Housing Manager. We also employ an Accommodation Liaison Officer to provide a link to the Private Sector and assist with providing accommodation in this sector. We have also used part of our Flexible Homelessness Grant to employ two Housing Support Officers on temporary contracts who work alongside the Housing Advisory Officers dealing with housing enquiries, processing housing register applications and completion of our new duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Officers also take lead roles in representing the service in statutory and partnership working such as attendance at MAPPA and MARAC meetings, and attendance at the Child Protection and Children in Need planning conferences.

The HRA came into force on 3rd April 2018 and introduced increased duties on local authorities in relation to homelessness. The Act places greater emphasis on the prevention of homelessness at an early stage and partnership working with external organisations and agencies.

Key changes include:

**An increase in the definition of ‘threatened with homelessness’ from 28 days to 56 days**

**The introduction of the 56 - day prevention and/or relief duty in relation to all households**

**A duty to work with all households to assess needs and create a Personalised Housing Plan with reasonable steps for both the applicant and the local authority**

**A duty on specified public bodies to refer households to the local authority where there is a threat of homelessness – Duty to Refer.**

Due to the significant changes introduced by the HRA, and in particular, in relation to when a formal homelessness application can be taken, statistical performance since April 2018 is not comparable to that of preceding years. However, in planning for the future it is still important to review performance of the years prior to the HRA.

The table below details performance on prevention since 2013

**Homelessness Prevented/Relieved cases:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 2013 - 2014 | 453 |
| 2014 - 2015 | 554 |
| 2015 - 2016 | 561 |
| 2016 - 2017 | 580 |
| 2017 - 2018 | 608 |

Looking at the 2017 – 2018 cases, the most used prevention tools where the household could remain in their home were:

* Conciliations – including advice given, medication and home visits – 159
* Debt Advice – 106
* Mediation – 145

The most used prevention tools where the household was helped to find alternative accommodation were:

* Secure private rented accommodation with landlord incentive – 44
* Secure private rented accommodation without landlord incentive – 71
* Social Housing Part VI offer – 50
* Supported accommodation – 33

**Homelessness – April 2018 to March 2019**

Since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act – the way we report on homelessness has changed to reflect the change in the legislation. Detailed below is a breakdown of those interventions with customers approaching as homeless or potentially homeless.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Prevented | 168 |
| Relieved | 61 |
| Advice given | 108 |
| Cancelled | 1 |
| Closed | 37 |
| Ineligible | 2 |
| Main Duty accepted | 10 |
| Triage | 14 |
| Intervention | 6 |
| Discretionary Housing Payment | 375 |
| **TOTAL** | **782** |

The Council has a number of homelessness prevention tools at its disposal including activities like negotiation with family and landlords, provision of mediation services, home visits, debt and money advice, use of supported housing schemes and a small amount of temporary accommodation. Work on prevention and the relief of homelessness is the focus for the Council’s Housing Options & Advice Team.

**Homelessness acceptances**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 2013 - 2014 | 14 |
| 2014 - 2015 | 65 |
| 2015 - 2016 | 62 |
| 2016 - 2017 | 63 |
| 2017 - 2018 | 56 |
| 2018 - 2019 | 11 |

Please note that the acceptance figure for 2018/19 and subsequent years will be lower because since the implementation of the HRA, there has been even more emphasis on prevention and the introduction of relief, so fewer cases get to acceptance stage because of successful outcomes reached beforehand.

**Temporary Accommodation**

Unfortunately, the prevention of homelessness is not possible in all cases and the housing options & advice service is the safety net for those who are in crisis and require emergency interventions. The numbers of families and single applicants being placed in temporary accommodation and emergency bed & breakfast has increased over the past 5 years. Some Registered Providers allow the housing options & advice team to nominate these families or individuals to their stock managed by an assured shorthold tenancy. Radian manage a portfolio of short-stay flats for households (single or couples) with one child. Radian have been reviewing this accommodation and a specific building has been identified and can be utilised for singles. They are also considering the feasibility of modifying other units to provide accommodation for larger families. Petersfield Housing Association, with funding from East Hampshire District Council has converted a building in Alton which provides spacious temporary accommodation alongside other properties that are used for temporary accommodation. We have 56 Studio flats, 26 x 1 bed flats, 68 x 2 bed houses/flats and 49 x 3 bed houses (total of 199 which fluctuates by about 20 up and down)

These properties are very popular and are very rarely vacant for long.

Bed & breakfast usage has increased over the past five years. Bed & Breakfast accommodation is only used when temporary accommodation is unavailable or temporary accommodation is unsuitable and the Council has a duty to accommodate. Bed & Breakfast accommodation is not suitable for families with children and we aim to meet the government’s guidance to ensure this is not used for longer than six weeks. Detailed in brackets is the total number of weeks spent in B&B. This figure was only reported on from 2015.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Numbers of households accommodated in emergency temp accommodation (B&B)** | | | | | |
| **2013-14** | **2014-15** | **2015-16** | **2016-17** | **2017-18** | **2018 -19** |
| 21 | 31 | 36 (108) | 38 (194) | 25 (160) | 56 (265) |

Bed & breakfast placements have significantly increased since the introduction of HRA 2017, as we are assisting more people under the new duties introduced in the Act. To try and reduce this we are always looking at alternatives forms of temporary accommodation. We have been working in partnership with a registered provider to provide 5 units of accommodation within Alton as an alternative to bed & breakfast. This accommodation does have support, which will aid occupants to secure alternative accommodation and referrals to other organisations and services as required. This new accommodation was available from September 2019.

Numbers of homeless singles seeking assistance has been increasing year on year. The number of singles approaching for emergency accommodation since the HRA was introduced has risen considerably. Based on housing assessments the main recorded support needs of customers were mental health, generic/complex needs, substance misuse, offending support needs and some low-level disability.

Homelessness is not just a housing issue, but often involves a variety of other complex and overlapping factors. Customers often have a variety of needs and improving outcomes for homeless people requires services to work together to address those needs. Multi-agency work takes place between housing services, health services, mental health services, Adult and Children’s Services, the Police, criminal justice services, employment services, Registered Providers and other Local Authority Departments such as Housing Benefit and Private Sector Housing to support vulnerable customers.

The new strategy’s action plan also includes actions to address rough sleeping in the district, whilst there are not huge numbers recorded, the Council is very aware of many people ‘sofa surfing’, moving on continuously. Every Autumn, local authorities are required to conduct an annual survey of the number of people sleeping rough in their area. Typically, this involves a snapshot survey where a count is carried out on a given date and/or a collection of data obtained from services working in the local area of know rough sleepers is collated (known as an estimate).

**Rough Sleeper Count figures November 2018**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Location** | **Rough Sleeping numbers** |
| East Hampshire | 4 |
| Havant | 5 |
| Basingstoke & Deane | 8 |
| Rushmoor | 8 |
| Hart | 0 |
| Fareham | 19 |
| Gosport | 0 |
| Test Valley | 9 |
| Eastleigh | 0 |
| New Forest | 8 |
| Winchester | 8 |

For people who are homeless and without entitlement or access to housing, the provision of Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) is their only chance to escape severe weather. East Hampshire District Council triggers SWEP during short periods of high risk weather. The minimum trigger is a forecast of three nights below freezing, so that people sleeping rough have a bed out of harm’s way. While it should not be the only response to rough sleeping, SWEP is vital to prevent harm and death. This is the only type of provision that is open to all, including people with no recourse to public funds and those who have been excluded from other services. EHDC has been very flexible in respect of the weather criteria and have extended it in times of extreme wet and windy weather too.

The Council in partnership with Havant BC has been successful in obtaining funding from the Government’s £11m Rough Sleeper Initiative which has been utilised to have a dedicated outreach worker in place to work with rough sleepers to enable them to engage with services, so they may end their rough sleeping and also to co-ordinate the services available in order to focus the resources on assisting rough sleepers into support and housing rather than facilitating a continued rough sleeping lifestyle. Details of this are within Priority 4 of the Action Plan.

# The Homelessness Review 2018/19

To help feed into the Review and the district’s Homelessness Strategy, a Partnership Forum was set up to gain the views of all of our stakeholders and partners.

Representatives from partner organisations both statutory, community and voluntary, were invited to attend the workshop and agencies who were unable to attend were invited to provide information regarding the support they provide in order to feed into the review. A list of organisations invited to attend the workshop or take place in subsequent consultation can be found at Appendix 2 of the review.

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As part of local authority shared services, the partnership forum included representatives from a wide range of public, private, community and voluntary organisations working across the East Hampshire District Council area. The workshop sought to map out the existing support and service provision that contributes to the prevention and relief of homelessness across the two authorities. The forum also sought to identify issues which hampered support to those who were homeless or threatened with homelessness and consider ways in which these could be overcome or be improved.

The outcome of the process enabled us to identify the areas of work which need to be included in the strategy’s action plan. It is also envisaged that the action plan will remain in the ownership of not just the Council, but also this Homelessness Partnership Forum who will continue to meet to discuss and develop ways in which to reduce homelessness within the borough and provide the most appropriate services to those in need.

The ethos of the Homelessness Reduction Act is that ‘homelessness prevention is everyone’s business’ which is particularly reflected in the Duty to Refer where public bodies are expected to identify within their service those users who may be homeless or threatened with homelessness and refer to housing services for advice and assistance as early as possible.

The Homelessness Reduction Act also places a more holistic approach to an individual’s housing needs, not only to identify why they are homeless, but also what support needs they may have that need addressing which could prevent them becoming homeless now or in the future. There is therefore an even more imperative need for services to work under a multi-agency approach as Housing Services cannot meet all the complex needs of individuals in isolation.

We also sought the comments of the staff working on the front line in Housing Services to ascertain their thoughts on the same issues raised and discussed with the Homelessness Partnership Forum.

# Although it was recognised that the Council and partners had over the past few years really worked hard together to tackle homelessness and prevention figures were high, there are areas which are seen as needing improvement, such as:

# 

* The need for customers to engage earlier to allow interventions to be considered
* Managing the expectations of customer as to the housing options available
* Lack of temporary accommodation within the borough
* Lack of move on accommodation from temporary or supported accommodation
* Lack of affordable social and private rented accommodation
* Understanding the needs of rough sleepers and managing the support on offer
* Managing the reduction in support to prevent homelessness
* Better communication and multi-agency working between organisations
* Embedding that ‘homelessness prevention is everyone’s responsibility’ in to all organisations

**Priorities for action**

This review has identified the following areas for action and these will become the basis for the priority areas in the Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy Action Plan, these include:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. The need for customers to engage earlier to allow interventions to be considered | * Continue to promote the Duty to Refer to public bodies and encourage non-public bodies to adopt a commitment to refer * Better promote the services available from Housing Services and how customers can engage at an early stage * Provide more robust awareness amongst professionals of the services Housing Services * Provide and how they can refer their customers at an earlier stage * Improve access to advice and assistance through the council website and the Hampshire Home Choice website |
| 2. The challenge of significant cuts to budgets previously distributed by Hampshire County Council including Social Inclusion Review with cuts totalling £2million. | * Map out local resources and services that can be used as an alternative. * Investigate possibility of inhouse Outreach Support – funded through Flexible Housing Grant |
| 3. Need for more private rented accommodation, as well as providing sufficient packages to assist those threatened with homelessness in accessing it. | * Ensure funding available for rent in advance, deposits/bonds and landlord fees. * Review PSH offer * Ensure that landlords are aware of additional support from Accommodation Liaison Officer. |
| 4. Shortfall in provision of affordable accommodation appropriate to the current and future needs of the district, including specialist accommodation | * Liaison with Planning and Development Teams, especially for adapted properties before building starts. Evaluate the suitability of non-traditional building systems to address the needs of disabled clients or families with a disabled child. * Delivery of more affordable units of accommodation, in particular the provision of more 1 bedroomed units. |
| 5. Need to develop services so that volumes can be more effectively managed. | * Monitoring and evaluation of service provision. * Identify good practice and innovation * Provide informal opportunities to communicate through round table discussions and web-based networks * Evidence what does and doesn’t work * Identify the barriers to improved efficiencies * Showcase case studies |
| 6. Agree on future top priorities for expenditure of Flexible Housing Grant | * Agree priorities and explore options for expenditure that offers the most value. * Confirm funding for single non-priority households for rent and deposits |
| 7. More joined up working between commissioned and non-commissioned services. | * Working in partnership is paramount and being aware of local resources and services who can assist is a necessity. * Closer working with local churches and church organisations. |
| 8. Shortfall in provision of temporary accommodation in area, primarily for singles and couples | * Reduce bed & breakfast usage as unsuitable and expensive. * Work with Development Team to explore other options which can provide emergency accommodation in the local area which would mean that contact with Housing Options & Advice can be easily maintained as can support from partner organisations and health professionals. * Evaluate the suitability of non-traditional building systems as an alternative option to bed & breakfast accommodation. |
| 9.Look at whether Housing First is a model that could be successful in East Hampshire. | * This option may be suitable for the more challenging complex households. * Discuss with registered providers. |
| 10. Better communication and multi-agency working between organisations. | * Attend and chair Homelessness Forum meetings. * More joint working to address the needs of more complex cases. Need more involvement with Adult Social Care and Children’s Services. |
| 11. Invest in staff to enable them to sustain their compassion and resilience | * Training needs to be identified * Joint training with other local authorities to reduce cost * Ensure Officers are kept up to date with changes in legislation. |
| 12. Understanding the needs of rough sleepers and managing the support offered | * Expand on annual rough sleeper count/estimate and carry out a robust needs analysis of those rough sleeping * Carry out analysis of data available on sofa surfing activity and target advice and assistance to prevent this slipping in to rough sleeping * Continue to work with statutory and non-statutory bodies and voluntary community groups to co-ordinate data about rough sleepers * Through joint work, encourage the safe practise of supporting rough sleepers through voluntary and community organisations rather than direct assistance to an individual |
| 13. Need to reduce use and the length of stay in B&B and reduce out of area placements | * Consider alternative initiatives for providing emergency and short-term accommodation – possible pods initiative and look at change of use |
| 14. Need for early accurate advice and advocacy before crisis point. | * Publication of our services and confirm contact details. * Promotion of Duty to Refer responsibilities |
| 15. Tackling public perceptions of homelessness and addressing stereotypes to ensure that access to accommodation is increased. | * Ensure website information is easy to access and regularly updated. * Investigate possibility of “Tenancy Training” to demonstrate skills obtained and ensure applicants can manage a tenancy- to minimise risk to Registered Providers it can also demonstrate that an individual has changed behaviour and is ready to move into accommodation. * Managing expectations/education around homelessness and ensure that communities are aware that our focus will be on preventing homeless and not accessing social rented properties. |
| 16. Affordability and Welfare Reform | * Close monitoring of Universal Credit will be required. * Close partnership working with Registered Providers, DWP and the private sector, so that housing services are aware of issues that may lead to homelessness at the earliest opportunity |
| 17. Lack of affordable social and private rented accommodation | * Continue to encourage the development of social/affordable housing with developers and registered providers * Continue to work with registered providers to ensure the best use of stock within the borough through creative letting and local lettings plans * Continue to work with private sector landlords to encourage the availability of suitable accommodation |
| 17. Managing the expectations of customers as to the housing options available | * Ensure we have a comprehensive package of housing options available to meet diverse needs * Ensure options available are transparent and explained so informed choices can be made * Ensure other professional organisations are aware of the housing options available so as not to misinform their customers |
| 18. Ensure Executive Board/Cabinet and Cllrs are kept informed and aware of changes in legislation and the homelessness profile | * Regular briefings * Management information * Offer of shadowing the team |

These priority areas have been developed into a comprehensive action plan which details who and how we will deliver against the actions.

**Resources** – delivery of the Action Plan will be contained within existing resources and the grant funding provided from the Government specifically for homelessness prevention and relief see the table **Grant Funding** below:-

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Purpose of Funding** | 2018 - 19 | 2019 - 20 |
| New Burdens | £25,997 | £25,172 |
| Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG) | £196,195 | £263,462 |
| Top up to FHSG | N/A | £73,000 |
| Rough Sleeper Initiative | N/A | £35,000 (Joint funding with Havant Borough Council) |
| TOTAL | £222,192 | £396,634 |

This grant funding is to be used to support any initiatives/projects which will prevent or relieve homelessness. The funds, apart from the RSI can be carried forward if not spent in year – **at the present time there have been no further indications of what the funding will be for 2020 and future years.**

To date the grant has been used for the following initiatives :-

Additional Staffing – 2 members of staff on fixed term contracts

SLAs with Two Saints to provide flexible Community Support following on from the reduction of £2.2m from the Hampshire CC Social Inclusion budget.

SLA with Two Saints to provide outreach to those in B&B outside the area.

2 x Supported lodgings placements

Loans and deposits to enable renting in the private sector.

Incentives to PRS Landlords

IT upgrades to ensure compliance with completing government statistics.

New initiatives identified in the review and contained within the Action Plan will be supported by this grant.

**Summary**

We are committed to ensuring this strategy remains a live document and delivers tangible results for those in housing need in the district. To ensure that this happens, the Action Plan will be reviewed as part of regular performance appraisal monitoring for individual officers within the Housing Service.

Responsibility for ensuring that this strategy delivers key objectives lies with the Council’s Head of Housing and Community Engagement, supported by the Housing Options & Advice Manager, who will ensure that the Action Plan is updated on an annual basis with a progress report submitted to the Executive Board and Cabinet, followed by a Briefing for Councillors.

Key performance indicators which reflect a number of the strategy’s objectives are reported on a monthly basis to Executive Board. Officers will continue to meet partners and regularly host a district Homelessness Forum, to review progress against targets and changes required to continue to meet housing need in the district.

**Appendices**

Action Plan 2019-2024

Homelessness Review

Affordable Housing Statement

Allocation Framework

Provision of Temporary Accommodation Policy

Discharge of Duty into the Private Rented Sector

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol

**APPENDIX B**

**East Hampshire District Council**

**Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy 2019-2024 Action Plan**

|  |
| --- |
| **PRIORITY 1: To ensure all our customers are provided with appropriate advice, assistance and support to enable them to address their housing needs and to lead independent lives. Emphasis to be on early intervention, building on existing services and continuously improving service delivery** |

| **No.** | **What** | **By When** | **Who will deliver this?** | **Milestones** | **Target/**  **Outcome** | **Comments /**  **Status** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1.1 | Policies and procedures reviewed and regular staff training undertaken to ensure the requirements of the HRA 2017 are met | Revised annually | Housing Manager in consultation with the team | HRA and asset based assessment training completed with staff  Policies and procedures review | All staff understand the HRA 2017 requirements and are able to operate in a compliant way |  |
| 1.2 | All applicants to receive meaningful assessments and advice to reflect that the service is tailored to individuals’ goals and aspirations | Ongoing | Housing Manager/Senior Housing Options Officers | Monthly case audits and individual staff supervision addressing any deficiencies | Asset based assessment is embedded in our service delivery |  |
| 1.3 | Ensure that the IT system continues to be HRA and H-CLIC compliant and develop the reporting mechanisms to enable effective monitoring. | Annually | Housing Options and Advice Manager/HoS  HHC Manager  Civica | IT system that enables officers to meet HRA requirements | An IT solution that integrates with existing allocation and Housing register system. Reporting tools to ensure effective management information to identify trends etc. |  |
| 1.4 | Conduct monthly light touch case audits to monitor service quality, compliance with HRA procedures and to inform any appropriate amendments to service delivery and performance management | Monthly from January 2020 | Housing Options & Advice Manager | Case audit results discussed at team meetings and in 1-1s  Findings addressed each month and service delivery improved | All staff working consistently  All staff working in a procedurally compliant way  Performance issues addressed  Training needs identified |  |
| 1.5 | Revise service performance indicators in light of the Homelessness Reduction Act changes. | April 2020 | Head of Service /Housing Options & Advice Manager |  | Revised KPI measures to facilitate performance monitoring  Cllrs and Executive Board are easily able to review performance |  |
| 1.6 | Ensure staff and relevant agencies understand their responsibilities in relation to the ‘Duty to Refer’ (DTR) and appropriate process is established to comply with HRA – this links to the target in the Hampshire Health and Wellbeing Action plan target | February 2020 | Housing Options & Advice Manager | DTR process fully understood by relevant agencies  Procedure established to ensure a speedy and efficient response to DTR referrals | Partner agencies clear on their responsibilities and trained on DTR and how to refer  KPI measures to facilitate performance monitoring |  |
| 1.7 | Revise all literature and update website in plain English reflecting the HRA and asset based assessments to ensure customers know how and where to approach the service and what to expect | February 2020 and then ongoing | Housing Options & Advice Manager  Communications team (to review literature) | Revise literature  Publicise literature on website  Develop range of self-help tools/packs available for download from the website  Review and monitor annually | All literature will be up to date and reflect current services and any changes in legislation |  |
| 1.8 | Review the Council’s Scheme of Allocation and the Hampshire Home Choice Allocation Framework in light of the HRA and ensure it reflects local priorities | Annually | Housing Manager / HHC Manager | Amendments to the HHC framework agreed and implemented by HHC Board    HHC and EHDC websites updated.  Disseminate to all relevant partner agencies including Registered Providers. | Information is easy to understand and made available to customer on line, in the council offices and with partner agencies.  Local lettings policies on all new developments to ensure balanced and sustainable communities |  |
| 1.9 | Support the Hampshire Making Safe Scheme, by supporting victims of domestic abuse with options and information to enable them to remain safe in their homes in accordance with HRA17 | April 2020 and ongoing | Housing Options & Advice Manager/HAOs  Hampshire Making Safe Scheme Co-Ordinator | Appropriate changes made to literature  Promotion of the services to registered providers and other key agencies | Updated information available to all staff, customers and partners |  |
| 1.10 | To only use B&B when all other options have been considered. | ongoing | Housing Options & Advice Manager/HAOs | Reduction in the use of bed and breakfast against budget | Only using this form of accommodation in the event of an emergency and for no longer than 6 weeks. |  |
| 1.11 | Review our current Private Rented Sector Offer with a view to increasing local PRS opportunities | January 2020 – March 2020  (and annually) | Accommodation Liaison officer/Housing Options & Advice Manager | Assessment of good practice currently provided by other local authorities  Produce a professional landlords pack and customers pack  Have an agreed timescale for settling in visits and regular follow up visits during tenancy  Develop/amend our offer  Comprehensive communication and advertising | To maximise the number of private sector rental properties that EHDC customers can access and to ensure the effectiveness of PRSOs  To ensure excellent communication and support is provided to both landlord and tenant to enable customers to sustain their tenancy  To ensure that tenants receive the assistance they need at an early stage to increase their chances of remaining in their private sector property |  |
| 1.12 | Undertake an annual training needs analysis of the Housing Options and Advice Team to ensure they have the skills to deliver the asset based model of delivery and remain HRA17 compliant | April 2020 | Housing Manager | Training content agreed.  Training content to includes gaps identified in appraisals and case audit process as outlined above  Delivery of session | Delivery of training resulting in a fully skilled Team being fully up to date on current caselaw |  |
| 1.13 | Housing Options & Advice Officers/Two Saints to remain in regular contact with customers who have triggered homelessness duties with regular “touch base” contact made |  | HAOs/Support Officers and Two Saints |  | Ongoing support and knowledge of customer’s situations  Sustained advice and assistance to move on from temporary accommodation  Able to identify issues affecting customers throughout their journey  Process focused towards agreeing and amending Personalised Housing Plans |  |
| 1.14 | Undertake visits / inspections to B&B establishments to monitor quality of accommodation being provided in those exceptional cases that require a B&B placement (all have been initially inspected by PSH but this is an ongoing check) | April 2020 and then as required | HAOs  Environmental Health Officer | Visits conducted to main B&B providers used in placing homeless people | Identify any issues with the accommodation  Discuss improvement plan with the owner / cease to use the establishment |  |
| 1.15 | Ensure that all housing services staff are fully trained in respect of the housing options and support available to the Armed Forces Community in order to ensure the best advice available is provided when assisting them with their housing situations, | April 2020 and ongoing | Housing Options & Advice Manager | All staff have relevant briefings and kept up to date on changes to policies and are then equipped to advise appropriately | Those approaching for housing advice from the Armed Forces Community are fully informed of all their housing options |  |

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| **PRIORITY 2: To deliver more sustainable housing solutions for those facing homelessness and on the Housing Register – with the emphasis on reducing the use of B&B, placement outside area and taking the opportunity to be creative and innovative** |

| **No.** | **What** | **By When** | **Who will deliver this?** | **Milestones** | **Target/**  **Outcome** | **Comments /**  **Status** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2.1 | Deliver xxx affordable homes over the 3 year period. | March 2021 | Housing Development Team/Housing Options and Advice Team/Planning Policy | Quarterly reviews/ Performance indicators to measure if delivery on track | Delivery of xxx homes. Provision of good quality and affordable housing considering all types of tenure type |  |
| 2.2 | Review the Private Sector offer to customers | Summer 2020 | Housing Manager  Accommodation Liaison Officer  Housing Options & Team |  |  |  |
| 2.3 | Consider alternative forms of TA to reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for young families and young people | December 2020 and ongoing | Housing Managers -Development/options and advice | Business case to Cabinet January 2020 | Increase in TA  Reduction in use of B&B  Reduction in out of area placement  Fewer families spending 6 weeks in B&B  Singles having access to accommodation  Reduction in spend |  |
| 2.4 | Introduce a Housing Strategy for the district | Consultation to begin January 2020 with stakeholders | HoS/Housing Development Manager | To have a robust strategy that supports the delivery of affordable housing by being creative and innovative | Strategy in place by Winter 2020  Increase to housing delivery |  |
| 2.5 | Review the supply of temporary accommodation and identify future local temporary accommodation needs and how these can be best met. | Begin review March 2020 | Housing Options & Advice Manager/RPs who own TA | Sufficient level of temporary accommodation to address demand | Secure range and type of temporary accommodation to meet range of needs.  Reduce use of bed and breakfast accommodation  Reduction in costs |  |

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| **PRIORITY 3: Prevent and relieve homelessness by working in partnership with all our statutory and non-statutory partners - the emphasis to identify people who may at risk of homelessness at the earliest opportunity and ensuring appropriate support can be accessed.** |

| **No.** | **What we will do?** | **When will we do it by?** | **Who will deliver this?** | **Milestones** | **Target/**  **Outcome** | **Comments /**  **Status** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 3.1 | Establish a Homelessness Partnership Forum | April 2020 | Housing Manager | To ensure regular engagement with partners, sharing best practice | Continuous review of Action Plan |  |
| 3.2 | Housing Options & Advice Officers to improve joint working with Mental Health, Learning Disabilities, Adult and Children’s Services, Alcohol and Substance Misuse, Physical Health | Begin January 2020 | Housing Options & Advice Manager | Identify specific professionals to maintain contact within each organisation. | To build up positive working relationships with these agencies, devise referral processes/protocols and share relevant information and data to prevent homelessness and meet the legislative requirements of the new Homelessness Reduction Act 2017  Supportive network of agencies in a multi-disciplinary framework available for individuals and households enabling them to attain their goals and ambitions |  |
| 3.3 | Enable older people with disabilities to continue to live independently in their homes for as long as possible |  | PSH officers/In house OT  HAOs  HCC |  | Enable older people to remain independent in their homes  Meeting need, making best use of any extra care and affordable housing stock in the district.  Preventing homelessness |  |
| 3.4 | Devise an early intervention protocol with all Registered Providers in East Hampshire to address factors such as arrears, anti-social behaviour and other issues that may have a negative impact on a customer sustaining their tenancy | December 2020 | Housing Options & Advice Manager  HAOs | Liaise with main partner RPs to devise a protocol.  Widen the numbers of RPs included to ensure they are all working towards early intervention | RPs are ensuring that they contact the Housing Options & Team at a very early stage to prevent problems mounting up and ultimately enabling tenants to sustain their tenancy and prevent future evictions.  A protocol is in place, working effectively to ensure tenants remain in their home and prevent homelessness.  Customers receive structured multi-agency support where needed to maintain their tenancies.  Tenancies are reviewed by RPs more regularly to avoid crisis. |  |
| 3.5 | Work with Two Saints on the existing SLAs to ensure appropriate support is in place for | ongoing | Housing Options & Advice Manager | Two Saints to attend weekly meeting with team  Qtrly monitoring | Appropriate community flexible support available to those who require it |  |
| 3.6 | Liaise with Letting Agents to promote early signposting to Housing & Advice Options Team for tenants with arrears or other tenancy concerns to prevent homelessness | November 2020 | Accommodation Liaison officer/HAOs | Devise a professional pack of information to give to Lettings Agents  . | Build on current relationships with lettings agents to encourage them to inform their landlords and tenants about the services the Housing Options & Advice Team provide.  Lettings Agents routinely provide information to customers resulting in less arrears or other tenancy concerns building and therefore a reduction in PRS evictions |  |
| 3.7 | Review current practices in partnership with local prisons and probation service to develop identification and early intervention protocol to ensure people receive the right housing support and that all processes are HRA 2017 compliant. | April 2021 | Housing Options & Advice Team | Meet with all local prisons/probation services.  Devise a Protocol which all prisons and probation services can use.  Collect data and monitor processes.  Review annually | A positive working relationship is in place with prisons and the probationary service all working in partnership to increase the numbers of ex-offenders who successfully obtain and sustain their tenancies. |  |
| 3.8 | Review current practices in partnership with local hospitals to develop identification and early intervention protocol to ensure people receive the right housing support and that all processes are HRA 2017 compliant | Autumn 2020 | Housing Options & Advice Team | Identify the discharge leads within each hospital and liaise with them.  Agree a Protocol.  Collect data and monitor processes.  Review annually | A process is in place to enable hospitals to refer clients to the Housing Options & Advice Team to assist with finding suitable accommodation prior to release from hospital  All clients will be referred to the Housing Options & Advice Team and all services will have worked in partnership together to ensure the client is released from hospital to suitable accommodation |  |
| 3.9 | Housing Options & Advice Team to provide training as requested to partners regarding Hampshire Home Choice, bidding online, the lettings process, allocations policy, changes in homelessness legislation and its impact on agencies | ongoing | HAOs/Housing Manager |  | Partners are able to advise customers appropriately  Customers receive consistent advice |  |
| 3.10 | Ensure Housing Service uses locally gathered intelligence data as well as data available through central government and partner agencies to inform service development and delivery | April 2020 and then ongoing | HoS/Housing Manager | Clear understanding of data available within service and externally  Regular review of data against service delivery | Increased levels of homelessness prevented through targeted work using data analysis  Predictive indices developed to highlight relevant cohorts and locations  Services working together to target those cohorts and locations in the interests of early intervention |  |

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| **Priority 4: To understand the needs and requirements of those rough sleeping and sofa surfing within the area and provide sustainable solutions and options.** |

| **No.** | **What we will do?** | **When will we do it by?** | **Who will deliver this?** | **Milestones** | **Target/**  **Outcome** | **Comments /**  **Status** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 4.1 | Establish why high numbers of single people are continuing to sofa surf |  | Need to add |  |  |  |
| 4.2 | Develop a communications plan to educate the local community and partners about single homelessness |  | HoS/Housing Manager/Communications Team | Ensure that messages about risk associated with donation cash to people on the street  Appropriate press releases | Local residents do not inadvertently enable rough sleeping and sustain people on the street where there are offers of support being refused  Local residents actively report incidences of rough sleeping  Greater awareness and understanding of available services |  |
| 4.3 | Review Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) annually | April 2020 | Housing Manager/HAOs/Two Saints | Review 19/20 experience | Adequate SWEP provision in place  Advertised appropriately  Those accessing SEP are engaged with by wider support services  No-one sleeping rough during periods of bad weather (without clear offers of support)  Those accessing SWEP do not return to the streets |  |
| 4.4 | Continue to respond to reports of rough sleeping within 1 working day including outreach undertaken by the HAOs and Two Saints | ongoing | HAOs/Two Saints | All rough sleepers receive a visit and made offers of support | Local services respond rapidly to reports of rough sleeping  No rough sleeping  NFNO – no first night out  Minimum standard no second night out |  |
| 4.5 | Identify and engage with people who have been successfully accommodated, with a history of rough sleeping, to understand what works and what doesn’t to inform future service changes | May 2020 | Housing Manager |  | ..  Insight with the benefit of lived experience  Understanding what works and doesn’t and then make required service changes |  |

**APPENDIX**

**East Hampshire District Council**

**Homelessness Review**

**2018/2019**

**Introduction**

This document sets out the findings of the “homelessness review” for East Hampshire District Council. It has been produced to set out information regarding homelessness within the District and to take the priorities identified in the review to formulate future action plans.

Both this review and the subsequent strategy are part of the process that seeks to further develop comprehensive services to homeless and potentially homeless people across the area. Both documents seek to develop with our partners a shared:

* Understanding of the nature of homelessness in East Hampshire
* Delivery and action plans to prevent and tackle homelessness in the District

The review requires that the local authority assess the current homeless situation within their area, to forecast the likely extent of housing need and homelessness in the future, to identify existing support provision to prevent and relieve homelessness, and to identify any gaps or issues with current services and support provided. The findings of the review should form the basis for the content and actions included in the homelessness strategy. This review is written following the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018 and takes into account the additional duties introduced by the Act. It also takes account of the guidance set out in the Government’s Rough Sleeper Strategy published in August 2018. The review was undertaken between October 2018 – Summer 2019. A broad range of information collection techniques have been used to inform this review, including:

* Reviewing service/performance data on homelessness and the housing register
* Reviewing service/performance on delivery of Affordable Housing
* Discussions with other local authorities
* Consultation with service users and team members
* Discussions/workshop/meetings with people who work in homelessness services, organisations and agencies that support the work to reduce homelessness

**National context**

The last few years have seen significant changes which are likely to impact on homelessness:

* Introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which has extended statutory responsibilities for local authorities to provide meaningful support to single people as well as extending prevention & relief duties for all eligible households.
* The overall rate of new housing provision is not keeping pace with household growth and is failing to reduce housing market pressures.
* Welfare reform continues to have an impact on those receiving benefits (lower benefit caps, Universal Credit and freezing of Local Housing Allowance rates).
* Cuts to local government funding including the Supporting People programme
* The full impact of the United Kingdom’s decision to leave the European Union is hard to predict at this time.
* The Localism Act 2011 – shifting power from central government back into the hands of individuals, communities and local authorities.
* The Increase in Rough Sleeping and government’s Rough Sleeper Strategy to end rough sleeping

**Local Context**

The East Hampshire District Council area, with a population of 119,392, is a desirable place to live and work.  It lies in the south and eastern part of Hampshire.  East Hampshire and the South Downs National Park which covers part of the District will achieve lower growth in terms of housing and commercial development.

There are a number of key issues facing the Council. These include:

* An ageing population with 23% of residents above the age of 65.
* Outmigration of the workforce with 25,712 commuting out of East Hampshire compare to 15,505 in-commuting.
* Property values 31% above that of England and Wales in East Hampshire
* Land values in East Hampshire at circa £6m per hectare, which is well above the average in England (ex. London) which stands at circa £2.8m per hectare
* House price to earnings ratios above the national average
* Plan for a minimum 10,456 additional new homes between 2017 and 2036 (the life of the draft East Hampshire Local Plan)
* Decreasing ability to secure accommodation private rented sector due to high rents.

**New Homes**

The Council has challenged itself to provide a ‘front door for everyone’, whilst ‘improving people’s lives’, through the delivery of the draft Local Plan 2017-2036. The Local Plan seeks to address the issues facing the Council by providing homes and jobs whilst enhancing the area’s character and natural and built environment. In order to meet the housing need, as identified in the Council’s Housing and Economic Needs Assessment 2019 (HEDNA), the district requires the construction of an estimated 608 homes per annum.

All new development sites of at least 10 dwellings will be required to provide 40% affordable housing.   This percentage will, over time, see the 1,200 (approx) households registered on Hampshire Home Choice provided with a high-quality and affordable home of their own. The percentage also reflects the viability of new developments and is representative of a buoyant housing market, with average house prices in East Hampshire at £374,587 (June 2019 Average price of property in England was £246,728 National Statistics UK Price Index England). House price inflation continues to be strong in the area with East Hampshire seeing a 32% rise in property values between 2013-17, which is some 9% above increases in England and Wales over the same period. The Council supports Registered Providers operating within the District and nomination arrangements exist through Hampshire Home Choice. Affordable housing delivery has been substantial in recent years with 870 affordable homes being built over the 5year period 2014-19, compared to 375 in the preceding 5year period 2009-13.

Affordable housing is normally arranged in small clusters of no more than 10 homes around development sites, with the size, type and tenure being negotiated on a site by site basis to best reflect the housing needs of the area. Rented homes remain the priority tenure and it is expected that the affordable housing element on most developments will comprise 70% of rented housing with the remaining 30% as intermediate housing, under the expanded definition within NPPF2. The period 2014-19 has seen 583 rented homes built, which represents 67% of the total, compared to 287 (33%) intermediate homes built over the same period.

In East Hampshire the new homes are to be allocated into the main settlements of the District whilst acknowledging that 57% of the District is within the National Park boundary where there are naturally constraints on new development.  In the north of the district new homes will be concentrated in Alton, Whitehill and Bordon and the Four Marks areas, in the central part of the District in Petersfield and Liphook and in the south Clanfield, Horndean and Rowlands Castle.  The Local Plan continues to have a positive impact in delivering new homes with 799 market homes and 305 affordable homes built over 2018/19, well in excess of the 608 annual target required to meet the 2036 new homes target.

Housing and Planning policies continue to have a positive impact in delivering new homes, with 799 market homes and 305 affordable homes built over 2018/19. This is well in excess of the 608 home annual requirement that is necessary to meet the new homes target of delivering a minimum of 10,456 homes between 2017 and 2036

It is considered that the provision of rented and intermediate housing on a site will allow for a mix of different income groups to reside within affordable housing schemes. However, the Council also needs to be flexible, particularly when dealing with small sites or where it is appropriate to consider other site-specific factors, including market changes, viability and what is right for the community. In reaching any decision the Council will bear in mind the identified high level of need for rented housing which is genuinely affordable.

The sizes, types and tenures of homes provided will be determined on the basis of local need as identified in the Interim HEDNA (2018) and, where appropriate, by other local needs surveys and information, such as Hampshire Home Choice. The policy seeks to ensure that the affordable housing is dispersed amongst the market housing and is to be genuinely ‘pepper-potted’ and not in blocks.

Health and Wellbeing (information from the Local Plan)

Planning can have a significant role in improving health and wellbeing and enabling healthier lifestyles. Creating and supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities is a key element of delivering sustainable development. There are many different factors which have an influence on people's health and wellbeing including education, employment opportunities, good housing at an appropriate price, open space, an active lifestyle, cultural and community facilities, care and health facilities and safe environments. It is important community needs are supported through appropriate physical and social infrastructure and by other facilities and key services which contribute to improving wellbeing and the overall quality of life experienced by residents. The planning system, and new development, can make a real difference in these areas and helping residents experience a high quality of life is, therefore, a key theme that cuts across many policies of the Council’s Local Plan.

Data from the 2011 census suggests that across the District, some 27% of households contain someone with a Long-term health illness or disability. This figure is slightly lower to than the national average, however, it’s important to acknowledge this in future planning.

Employment (information from the Local Plan)

Planning needs to respond to market conditions and also protect and maintain a good supply of appropriate sites and premises for all kinds of businesses in order to encourage economic growth. The failure to provide suitable employment land (in terms of quality and quantity) to meet business requirements could lead to the relocation of businesses resulting in loss of jobs; limit business growth and development and as a result, have a negative impact on job creation and retention; and deter inward investment and risk East Hampshire becoming a dormitory area.

There are 60,953 economically active people in the district, with unemployment at 2,133 (Census 2011). Around a sixth (16%) of households have incomes below £20,000 with a further third in the range of £20,000 to £40,000. Overall the average (mean) income is estimated to be around £56,200, with a median income of £42,700. Employment

**Defining homelessness**

Homelessness can take many forms:

* **Rough sleeping:** this is the most visible form of homelessness and includes people bedding down on the streets or sleeping on public transport etc. Its causes are complex and
* **Statutory homelessness:** this is where people or households have approached the local authority as they are either threatened with homelessness or are actually homeless.
* **Hidden homeless:** these people and households are generally not included in official statistics as they may be staying with friends and family on a temporary basis, sleeping on their sofa for example. They may also be living in housing which should not be occupied for health and safety reasons.

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017 fundamentally changed councils’ legal duties towards homeless households, which are summarised below: -

**A duty to provide free advisory services** to anyone in the local area about a range of things, such as preventing homelessness and securing accommodation when homeless. These services should be designed to meet the needs of people using them. (HRA 2017)

Certain public bodies, which includes social services authorities, have a **duty to refer** any users of their services who may be homeless or threatened with homelessness to the relevant service within the council. (HRA 2017)

**A duty to assess homeless applications and agree a personal housing plan** with anyone that is eligible and homeless or threatened with homelessness. The plan should set out the actions both the applicant and the council will take, to help address their homelessness. (HRA 2017)

**A duty to prevent homelessness** when someone is threatened with homelessness within 56 days. This applies to anyone who is eligible for assistance, regardless of whether they have a ‘priority need’ (see below for more information on priority need), found to be intentionally homeless or has a local connection to the area. The duty usually continues for 56 days, unless it is brought to an end by suitable accommodation becoming available for the person or household or they actually become homeless. (HRA 2017)

**A duty to relieve homelessness** when it could not be prevented, through the local authority taking reasonable steps to help an applicant secure suitable accommodation. This duty lasts for 56 days and it can generally only be brought to an end during this period if suitable accommodation is found which is available for at least six months. It applies to anyone with a local connection which is defined in law. If the local authority has reason to believe a homeless applicant may be eligible for assistance and they also have a ‘priority need’, then they must be offered interim or temporary accommodation at this stage. (HRA 2017, Housing Act 1996)

**A duty to provide housing** if homelessness could not be successfully prevented or relieved. This is known as the ‘main housing duty’ and is only owed to applicants who are eligible, have a ‘priority need’ for accommodation and are not homeless intentionally. Only certain people are considered to be in ‘priority need’, such as those who are pregnant, have children or are vulnerable in some way, such as because they are elderly, have a mental or physical illness or disability, have been in prison or care, are a young person or have become homeless due to domestic abuse. This duty is generally only brought to an end by the offer of a ‘suitable’ home, which is defined as social rented housing provided by a council or a registered provider for 4

All of the increased duties detailed above have been incorporated within new processes and all members of the team have been fully trained and will continually be kept up to date with legislation changes and case law.

**East Hampshire District Council’s Housing Service**

The Housing Service comprises two teams – the Housing Development Team and the Housing Options and Advice Team. They are based at Penns Place Petersfield and provides housing advice and assistance to anyone who requires it free of charge.  This can be to someone who has an issue with their housing situation, or a provider who has an issue with an occupant of their accommodation.  Advice is not restricted by tenure and anyone, whether living at home with family/friends, in a private or social rented property or owner occupiers, are equally entitled to seek assistance.

The Housing Service also has a statutory responsibility to process homelessness applications and to determine what duties are owed with assisting those at risk of losing their homes.  In all cases, prevention is the preferred outcome, but where not possible, identifying alternative accommodation is the next step, and in some cases, the provision of temporary accommodation until a settled housing solution can be reached.

The local housing authority also has a statutory responsibility to maintain a housing register which it does by processing applications for social housing through assessing a households housing needs to determine what priority should be awarded when allocating accommodation.

The Council is a non-stock holding authority, the housing stock was transferred under LSVT (large scale voluntary transfer) to East Hampshire Housing Association, who later merged to form Radian. As we do not hold any housing stock it is vital that we work in partnership with registered social landlords who manage the social & affordable housing within this district to assist with the allocation of accommodation through Hampshire Home Choice, the sub-regional choice-based lettings scheme.

In addition to the housing options and advice provisions, the Housing Service is also responsible for ensuring the adequate provision of housing development within the district through its housing enabling and housing strategy roles.  It does this in close partnership with its planners, housing developers and registered providers.

**Access to the Housing Service**

Due to the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 the Council offers scheduled appointments for housing assessments and a drop-in facility for housing advice on Monday - Friday between 9:30 – 12:30. The Council also provides emergency housing advice for all households daily Monday – Friday 9:00 – 17:00. Given the rural nature of the district there is a lot of telephone traffic and the Council is currently working to capture data.

The Council is also obliged to ensure that an emergency service is provided outside of office hours which it does in partnership with Havant Borough Council.  Officers have a duty telephone line where enquiries are taken by referral from the Council’s Emergency Out of Hours Service. This service is 24/7 365 days a year.

**Structure**

Housing Options and Advice Team is currently staffed by a team of 1 full and 5 part-time (which equates to a team of 4 full time Housing Advisory Officers), managed by the Housing Manager. We also employ an Accommodation Liaison Officer to provide a link to the Private Sector and assist with providing accommodation in this sector. We have also used part of our Flexible Homelessness Grant to employ two Housing Support Officers on temporary contracts who work alongside the Housing Advisory Officers dealing with housing enquiries, processing housing register applications and completion of our new duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Officers also take lead roles in representing the service in statutory and partnership working such as attendance at MAPPA and MARAC meetings, and attendance at the Child Protection and Children in Need planning conferences.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Year | Number of approaches for Advice and Assistance |
| 2013 - 2014 | 1634 |
| 2014 - 2015 | 1618 |
| 2015 - 2016 | 1433 |
| 2016 - 2017 | 1370 |
| 2017 - 2018 | 1466 |
| 2018 - 2019 | 1492 |

The service also provides advice and support to Private Sector Landlords as part of its private rental housing scheme. East Hampshire District Council has an Accommodation Liaison Officer to work in partnership with private landlords and letting agents to provide private rented properties to assist with its discharge of duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act.

The Development Team comprises a full-time Housing Manager and an Enabling Officer. The primary function of this team is to increase the supply of affordable homes to meet the housing needs of the district. This is achieved primarily through the planning system, underpinned by affordable housing obligations (s106), and collaboration with stakeholders in the development process. Technical support and advice is provided to developers, land owners, agents and registered provider to ensure that affordable housing proposals deliver both on quality and quantity, in compliance with national and local planning policies and guidance.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2014/15 | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 |
| Social Rent | 12 |  |  |  |  |
| Affordable Rent | 81 | 57 | 85 | 136 | 185 |
| Shared Ownership | 24 | 28 | 24 | 91 | 101 |
| Shared Equity |  |  | 6 | 3 | 19 |
| Intermediate Rent |  |  | 10 |  |  |
| Learning Disability (rented units) |  |  |  | 8 |  |
| Total | 117 | 85 | 125 | 238 | 305 |

Detailed in the table below are the development figures since 2014.

Affordable Housing (For more information regarding the work of the Development Team please see Appendix 2 – Statement 2018 – 2020)

**Private rented sector**

Due to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels being set at the lower end of the market and then frozen, rents locally have continued to rise. There is an increasing gap between the rents being requested and the amount that can be paid through Local Housing Allowance or Universal Credit. This means it is increasingly difficult for households who need benefits to be able to find rented accommodation that is affordable for them. This influences homelessness in two ways, households may lose a tenancy if they cannot afford to pay the rent and fall into arrears, but it also becomes a barrier to finding alternative accommodation if they do become homeless, as it is difficult to find accommodation that is affordable.

East Hampshire has five broad market rent areas (Basingstoke, Blackwater Valley, Guildford, Portsmouth and Winchester). This means the amount of Housing allowance payable can vary widely from one area to the next:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Size | Weekly LHA – August 2019 |
| Single room | £68.17 - £89.16 |
| 1 bedroom | £120.03 - £175.79 |
| 2 bedrooms | £148.69 - £222.96 |
| 3 bedrooms | £177.78 - £276.07 |
| 4 bedrooms | £240.00 - £366.24 |

Single people aged under 35 years will only receive the rate equivalent to renting a room. This has brought significant challenges for some people, especially those who are vulnerable or who have access arrangements for children. For those on low incomes or who are not currently working the demand for social rented property has increased. There has been an increase in approaches to the local authority for advice and assistance as more people feel their options are limited.

**Housing Demand in East Hampshire**

East Hampshire District Council is a partner of Hampshire Home Choice, a sub-regional Choice Based Lettings scheme set up in April 2009. Eastleigh Borough Council, Havant Borough Council, Test Valley Borough Council and Winchester City Council have all agreed to adopt a joint approach to allocating social & affordable housing and operate a sub-regional scheme across the five areas.

The table below shows information relating to the Housing Register for East Hampshire as of April 2019:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Housing Need** | **Number of active applicants registered** |
| 1 bedroom | 634 |
| 2 bedrooms | 397 |
| 3 bedrooms | 155 |
| 4 + bedrooms | 65 |
| **TOTAL** | **1251** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Priority band** | **Number of active applicants** |
| Band 1 | 2 |
| Band 2 | 127 |
| Band 3 | 1037 |
| Band 4 | 85 |
| **TOTAL** | **1251** |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Numbers on Hampshire Home Choice housing register for EHDC area (as at end of March in year)** | | | | | |
| **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** |
| 1985 | 1589 | 1516 | 1384 | 1307 | 1251 |

The numbers registered on Hampshire Home Choice have reduced due the changes in the Allocations Framework in 2013 when it was agreed following on from the Localism Act recommendations across the sub-region that band 5 (which included applicants with no local connection and applicants with no housing need) applicants be removed from the scheme.

Detailed below are the number of allocations through HHC and the income ranges of those on HHC at the end of March 2019.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Numbers of allocations through Hampshire Home Choice for EHDC area (as at end of March)** | | | | | | |
| **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **2017** | | **2018** | **2019** |
| 399 | 397 | 336 | 371 | | 470 | 482 |
| **Total Annual Employment Income Group** | | | | **Household numbers** | | | |
| + £5,000 | | | | 25 | | | |
| £10,000 | | | | 606 | | | |
| £11,000 - £14,000 | | | | 94 | | | |
| £15,000 - £20,000 | | | | 141 | | | |
| £21,000 - £25,000 | | | | 73 | | | |
| £26,000 - £30,000 | | | | 61 | | | |
| £30,000 - £35,000 | | | | 49 | | | |
| £35,000 - £40,000 | | | | 42 | | | |
| £40,000 - £45,000 | | | | 32 | | | |
| £45,000 - £50,000 | | | | 20 | | | |
| **TOTAL** | | | | **1143** | | | |

This is a snapshot of data from Hampshire Home Choice and in some cases could include welfare benefits or welfare benefits plus employment.

55.6% have a household income of up to £10,000.

12.44% have a household income between £15,000 and £20,000.

1.75% have a household income between £45,000 and £50,000.

**Hampshire Home Choice Average waiting times for applicants housed in East Hants between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Band 2** | **Band 3** | **Band 4** |
| 1 Bed | 1 year 2 months | 2 years 1 month | N/A |
| 2 bed flat | 1 year 2 months | 1 year 8 months | N/A |
| 2 bed house | 2 years 2 months | 2 years 8 months | N/A |
| 3 bed | 1 year 3 months | 2 years 3 months | N/A |
| 4+ bed | 3 years 4 months \*\* | 2 years 4 months | N/A |
| Over 55 yrs+ | 6 months | 11 months | 11 months |

**\*\*** *Please note that this longer wait even though in Band 2 for a 4B in particular areas, is due to the location of the four beds (often on new sites) and the S106 local criteria attached to them so it limited who could apply.*

**Support Services and Partners, we work with to support those threatened with homelessness**

**East Hampshire District Council Development Team** offer advice, technical guidance and financial assistance to aid the delivery of and improve the quality of affordable housing within the district.

**Citizens Advice East Hampshire** hold the contract for Universal Credit Support and provide budgeting and debt advice. We work in partnership to provide a clear pathway for advice and assistance.

**Bordon and Liphook Charities** provide financial help and support for local residents threatened with homelessness. They also manage the Bordon Furniture Helpline which provides furniture and white goods to customers.

**SAAFA** offer financial and emotional support to families of service personnel.

**Registered Providers** The main providers of social/affordable tenancies and properties let on an Assured Shorthold Tenancy, they include Radian, Vivid, Sovereign, Aster and PHA Homes**.** They offer a range of services to assist with the prevention of homelessness and Tenancy Support for households that struggle to maintain their tenancies. This may include employment, welfare benefits advice, advice regarding downsizing and Home Swapper.

**Two Saints** hold the Social Inclusion contract funded by Hampshire County Council. They provide accommodation and drop-in services throughout the district. They work with around 600 cases per year. They also provide outreach services to those rough sleeping and will assist with approaches to the Housing Options & Advice Team for further assistance.

**Community First** provides support for people looking to return to work, including confidence building, volunteering and work experience through its Positive Pathways program.

**Job Centre Plus** provides support to those seeking to return to work and can assist with travel expenses to enable claimants to attend interviews.

**East Hampshire District Council Revenues and Benefit service** provide advice and assistance to eligible households through Housing Benefit (Local Housing Allowance) and provides supplementary support through its Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). DHP can support households facing unforeseen changes which create financial hardship such as that following a change of circumstances. It has also been used to provide temporary financial support for households’ subject to changes in welfare benefit policy such as the “Bedroom Tax” or Spare Room Subsidy.

**Salvation Army** can provide showering facilities and signpost to other agencies and organisations that may be able to provide more long-term support.

**Stop Domestic Abuse** provides emergency accommodation for victims of domestic abuse through its 9-bedroomed accommodation within the district and one move-on property. They also offer outreach support and have some limited funding to help support residents with start-up costs for rented accommodation. Extra funding was obtained from MHCLG to create a scheme across Hampshire – Hampshire Making Safe Scheme which provides a target-hardening service across the county.

**Children’s Services** provide assessment and emergency accommodation provision for most 16 & 17year olds. They also may have a duty to accommodate children where they are without parents, or if the parents cannot get long term accommodation through a homelessness application, for example due to problems with their immigration status or in rare cases of intentionally homelessness.

**Adult Services** work alongside the Council and have a statutory obligation to safeguard and promote the welfare of vulnerable people. This includes the provision of extra care accommodation for older people and technology to help maintain their independence at home. For both organisations it is imperative that strong links are maintained and developed.

**Age UK** provides advice and support at local level and offers a dedicated advice line, a befriending service and comprehensive advice and sign-posting services aimed at making living at home more manageable for older people.

**Early Help Hub** model is coordinated through the multi-agency hub in East Hampshire. The hub is coordinated by the Family Support Service and involve a range of practitioners who contribute to the local Early Help hub. The Family Support Service is part of the “early help” provision for Hampshire run by Hampshire County Council for families with children aged 0-9 years (or up to 25 for young adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities) to provide a joined-up, whole family service to those who have high levels of need.

**Community Mental Health Teams** provide the statutory duty under the Care Act 2014 to carry out assessments and can make referrals to Supported Accommodation within the district. The “Connect to Support Hampshire” website provide links to other support agencies.

**Richmond Fellowship** has the mental health contract within East Hampshire and manages the stage 2 accommodation within the district.

**Food Banks** can provide food, clothing and bedding when referred by organisations such as EHDC, CAB and Two Saints.

**Substance Misuse** Inclusion Recovery Hampshire is part of the Hampshire drug and alcohol treatment and recovery service commissioned by Hampshire County Council.  The Hampshire drug and alcohol service are a partnership, which is led by Inclusion with partners providing the different elements of the service:

* The 26 and over service is Inclusion Recovery Hampshire
* The25 and under service is known as Hampshire 24/7 and is provided by Catch 22
* Parent Support Link who will be providing the integrated family and carer support service and have a 24-hour telephone line.

**Ex-offenders** the probation service provides support and advice including help with completion of forms as well as sign-posting to other support providers and can provide financial support with travel warrants. The Housing Options Team also attend the MAPPA (multi agency public protection arrangements) and MARAC (multi agency risk assessment conference) when requested.

**Local letting agents and private landlords** working with both of these groups to increase the supply of private rented properties available to the Council to help prevent homelessness.

**Winchester Night Shelter** provides 17 night-shelter places for over 18’s with 1-2-1 support provided (including tenancy training) and 8 off-site placements. Attached to this, the Trinity Day Centre provides advice and support including a 6-week well-being course. The night shelter does not operate a local connection criteria so referrals from EHDC can be considered.

**Support for the Armed Forces Community**

The Armed Forces Community refers to those who currently serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families.   The Armed Forces Covenant is an agreement that local authorities can sign up to and is about ensuring that the Armed Forces Community should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public services and that special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.

In providing a service to the Armed Forces Community we also need to work to make certain that our housing services staff are fully trained in respect of the housing options and support available to the Armed Forces Community in order to ensure we can provide the best advice available when assisting them with their housing situations, including awareness of the No Homeless Veterans campaign.

**Homelessness and Homelessness Prevention**

**Homelessness Prevention**

The Council’s focus for many years has been on preventing homelessness, and with the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 this now provides a formal framework to further enhance this work. In October 2018 the “Duty to Refer” came into force. It has been agreed across Hampshire that the procedure is the same across all local authorities. The duty of specified public authorities to refer a homeless person or a person threatened with homelessness to a local housing authority. This is to ensure that housing services are aware of potentially homeless cases at the earliest point.

**Homelessness Prevented/Relieved cases:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 2013 - 2014 | 453 |
| 2014 - 2015 | 554 |
| 2015 - 2016 | 561 |
| 2016 - 2017 | 580 |
| 2017 - 2018 | 608 |

Looking at the 2017 – 2018 cases, the most used prevention tools where the household could remain in their home were:

* Conciliations – including advice given, medication and home visits – 159
* Debt Advice – 106
* Mediation – 145

The most used prevention tools where the household was helped to find alternative accommodation were:

* Secure private rented accommodation with landlord incentive – 44
* Secure private rented accommodation without landlord incentive – 71
* Social Housing Part VI offer – 50
* Supported accommodation – 33

**Homelessness – April 2018 to March 2019**

Since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act – the way we report on homelessness has changed to reflect the change in the legislation. Detailed below is a breakdown of those interventions with customers approaching as homeless or potentially homeless.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Prevented | 168 |
| Relieved | 61 |
| Advice given | 108 |
| Cancelled | 1 |
| Closed | 37 |
| Ineligible | 2 |
| Main Duty accepted | 10 |
| Triage | 14 |
| Intervention | 6 |
| Discretionary Housing Payment | 375 |
| **TOTAL** | **782** |

The Council has a number of homelessness prevention tools at its disposal including activities like negotiation with family and landlords, provision of mediation services, home visits, debt and money advice, use of supported housing schemes and a small amount of temporary accommodation. Work on prevention and the relief of homelessness is the focus for the Council’s Housing Options & Advice Team.

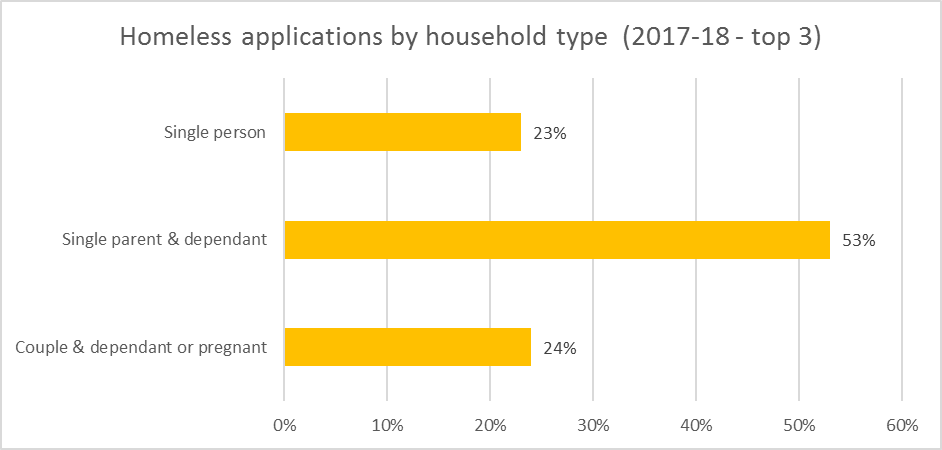
**Homelessness acceptances**

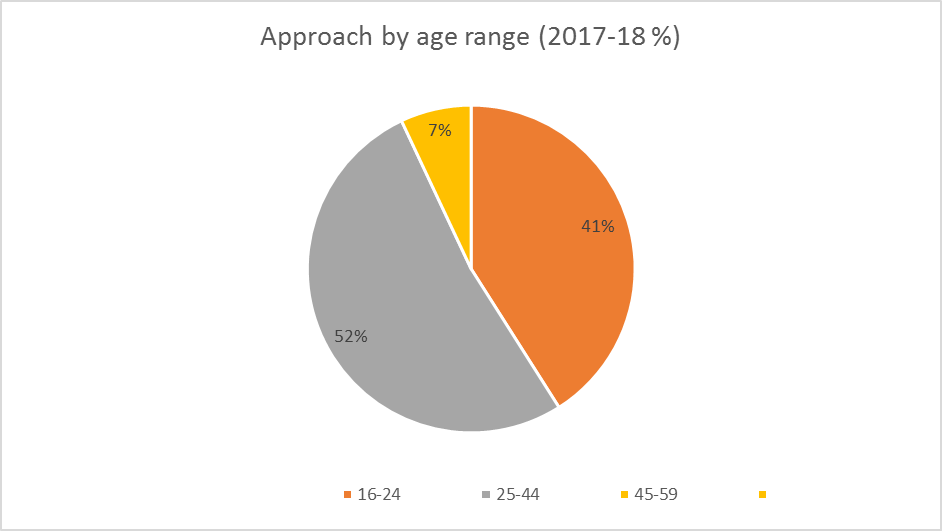
|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 2013 - 2014 | 14 |
| 2014 - 2015 | 65 |
| 2015 - 2016 | 62 |
| 2016 - 2017 | 63 |
| 2017 - 2018 | 56 |
| 2018 - 2019 | 11 |

Please note that the acceptance figure for 2018/19 is extremely low however this is because the emphasis has been on prevention and relief.

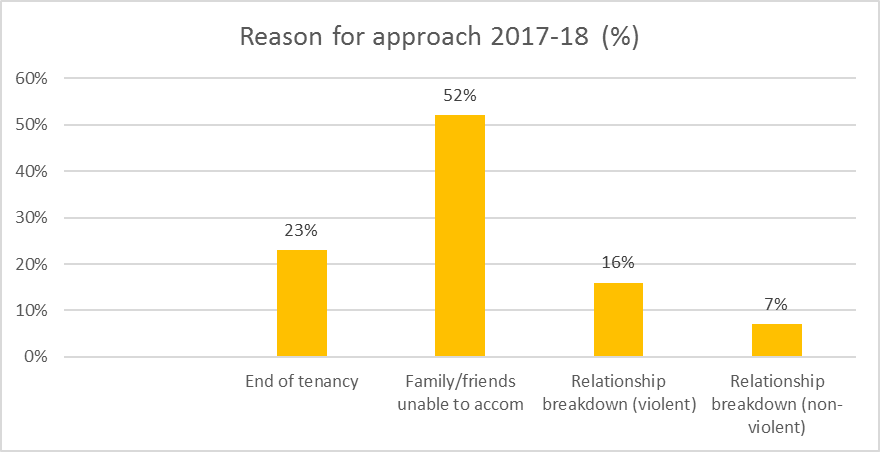
Profile of main applicant approaching as homeless (top 3) - by age range

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Profile of main applicant approaching as homeless – by age range (top 3)** | | | | | | |
|  | **2013-14** | **2014-15** | **2015-16** | **2016-17** | **2017-18** |  |
| Age range | | | | | | |
| 16-24 yrs | 33% | 32% | 38% | 37% | 41% |  |
| 25-44 yrs | 48% | 49% | 42% | 51% | 52% |  |
| 45-59 yrs | 19% | 19% | 20% | 12% | 7% |  |





|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Profile of main applicant approaching as homeless (top 3)** | | | | | |
|  | | | | | |
|  | **2013-14** | **2014-15** | **2015-16** | **2016-17** | **2017-18** |
| Household make-up | | | | | |
| Couple & child/children or pregnant | 34% | 32% | 31% | 19% | 24% |
| Single parent & child/children | 47% | 51% | 53% | 57% | 53% |
| Single person | 19% | 17% | 16% | 24% | 23% |



Over the past few years homelessness acceptances have declined. This does mirror the national picture which shows that there have been more proactive homelessness prevention tools used across England.

In 2017 – 2018 there were a total of 71 homelessness decisions, of which 5 were found to be intentionally homeless, 1 were non priority decisions and 6 were found to be no longer homeless and 3 were not eligible.

In 2017 – 2018 the causes of homelessness for the 56 households accepted as owing a full main duty were:

* Parents/friends no longer willing to accommodate - 32
* Termination of an assured shorthold tenancy - 17
* Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner - 3
* Violent breakdown of relationship with partner - 4

We also receive referrals via Streetlink of any individuals who are sleeping rough and complete an annual Rough Sleeper Estimate. The estimate is based on intel received from organisations and agencies across the district once a year. This year’s estimate was carried out in November 2018 and the number reported has doubled since 2017 from 2 to 4. Although relatively small numbers, the Housing Options & Advice Team have seen an increase in single people approaching the Council for assistance who have managed to stay with various family members or friends and who do not have a permanent place to live.

**Accommodation Liaison Officer**

This role is within the Housing Options and Advice Team, to work with private landlords and letting agents to provide another option for families who are facing homelessness. The officer can work with the landlord and assist with advice about tenancy agreements and necessary paperwork to ensure the property is suitable for letting, but also provides the tenant with assistance to claim Welfare Benefits and advising about other support agencies that may be required to maintain tenancies.

In some cases, securing accommodation in the private rented sector can be very expensive and out of reach for most customers. The Housing Options and Advice Team can assist with deposits or bonds and in some cases rent in advance. The following table shows the amount of bonds and deposits which have been issued by the Team:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Year | Number of Households assisted by a Deposit or Bond |
| 2016/2017 | 25 |
| 2017/2018 | 30 |
| 2018/2019 | 18 |
| 2019/2020 up to September 2019 | 18 so far |

**Rough Sleeping**

All local authorities submit annually either a count or estimate reporting on how many rough sleepers can be identified. These statistics make up the national picture and the local profile allows an assessment of the significance of the problem. Partners and local communities are asked to feed into the count on any local date they may be aware of to ensure we get as full a picture as possible.

**Rough Sleeper Counts/Estimates 2018**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Location** | **Rough Sleeping numbers** |
| East Hampshire | 4 |
| Havant | 5 |
| Basingstoke & Deane | 8 |
| Rushmoor | 8 |
| Hart | 0 |
| Fareham | 19 |
| Gosport | 0 |
| Test Valley | 9 |
| Eastleigh | 0 |
| New Forest | 8 |
| Winchester | 8 |

For people who are homeless and without entitlement or access to housing, the provision of Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) is their only chance to escape severe weather. East Hampshire District Council triggers SWEP during short periods of high risk weather. The minimum trigger is a forecast of three nights below freezing, so that people sleeping rough have a bed out of harm’s way. While it should not be the only response to rough sleeping, SWEP is vital to prevent harm and death. This is the only type of provision that is open to all, including people with no recourse to public funds and those who have been excluded from other services. EHDC has been very flexible in respect of the weather criteria and have extended it in times of extreme wet and windy weather and very hot weather.

We also receive referrals of rough sleepers through Streetlink. This is a website, mobile phone app and telephone service through which the public can take positive action when they see someone sleeping rough by sending an alert that connects that person to local services for support. All referrals are forwarded to Two Saints who will then try and make contact with the individual and support them to approach our Housing Options & Advice Team.

We are also aware that many individuals stay with various friends and family from one night to the next – sofa-surfing. Although these individuals may not be rough sleeping, they are homeless as they do not have secure accommodation to access. In several cases of sofa-surfing this can then lead to rough sleeping when friends and family grow tired of this arrangement.

**Temporary Accommodation**

Unfortunately, the prevention of homelessness is not possible in all cases and the housing options & advice service is the safety net for those who are in crisis and require emergency interventions. The numbers of families and single applicants being placed in temporary accommodation and emergency bed & breakfast has increased over the past 5 years. Some Registered Providers allow the housing options & advice team to nominate these families or individuals to their stock managed by an assured shorthold tenancy. Radian manage a portfolio of short-stay flats for households (single or couples) with one child. Radian have been reviewing this accommodation and a specific building has been identified and can be utilised for singles. They are also considering the feasibility of modifying other units to provide accommodation for larger families. Petersfield Housing Association, with funding from East Hampshire District Council has converted a building in Alton which provides spacious temporary accommodation alongside other properties that are used for temporary accommodation. We have 56 Studio flats, 26 x 1 bed flats, 68 x 2 bed houses/flats and 49 x 3 bed houses (total of 199 which fluctuates by about 20 up and down)

These properties are very popular and are very rarely vacant for long.

Bed & breakfast usage has increased over the past five years. Bed & breakfast accommodation is only used when temporary accommodation is unavailable or temporary accommodation is unsuitable and the Council has a duty to accommodate. Bed & breakfast accommodation is not suitable for families with children and we aim to meet the government’s guidance to ensure this is not used for longer than six weeks. Detailed in brackets is the total number of weeks spent in B&B. This figure was only reported on from 2015.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Numbers of households accommodated in emergency temp accommodation (B&B)** | | | | | |
| **2013-14** | **2014-15** | **2015-16** | **2016-17** | **2017-18** | **2018 -19** |
| 21 | 31 | 36 (108) | 38 (194) | 25 (160) | 56 (265) |

Bed & breakfast placements have significantly increased since the introduction of HRA 2017, as we are assisting more people under the new duties introduced in the Act. To try and reduce this we are looking at alternatives forms of temporary accommodation. We have been working in partnership with a registered provider to provide 5 units of accommodation within Alton as an alternative to bed & breakfast. This accommodation does have support, which will aid occupants to secure alternative accommodation and referrals to other organisations and services as required. This new accommodation was available from September 2019.

Numbers of homeless singles seeking assistance has been increasing year on year. The number of singles approaching for emergency accommodation since the HRA was introduced has risen considerably. Based on housing assessments the main recorded support needs of customers were mental health, generic/complex needs, substance misuse, offending support needs and some low-level disability.

Homelessness is not just a housing issue, but often involves a variety of other complex and overlapping factors. Customers often have a variety of needs and improving outcomes for homeless people requires services to work together to address those needs. Multi-agency work takes place between housing services, health services, mental health services, Adult and Children’s Services, the Police, criminal justice services, employment services, Registered Providers and other Local Authority Departments such as Housing Benefit and Private Sector Housing to support vulnerable customers.

**Consultation**

The Council has been keen to involve all its partner agencies and colleagues from other local authority services in the development of the Homelessness Strategy. The following activities have been focussed on seeking information, feedback and ideas from others to inform the Review and develop the Strategy:

* Workshops/meetings with a range of stakeholders
* Survey of service users.
* Providing the draft Review and inviting comments and feedback prior to the creation of the Strategy.
* Session with Housing Options & Advice Team to talk about homelessness issues locally.

Staff based in the East Hampshire Housing Options and Advice team raised their top concerns:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Placements in bed & breakfast out of area – mean that it very hard for staff to work closely with customers. Travel from some establishments are costly and with most on limited income – this is barrier to assisting with alternative accommodation | provision of support worker – to work with these placements |
| Former Tenants – who have a debt with providers of Temporary accommodation – will not be accepted if homeless – leading to extended periods in bed & breakfast | More debt advice and support is required |
| Lack of PSH that is within local LHA levels | Need to review PSH offer |
| More Registered Providers are requesting rent in advance | Need to raise as a concern with RP partners |

**The Homelessness Partnership Forum**

To help feed into the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the district’s homelessness review, workshops and meetings were with representatives from partner organisations both statutory, community and voluntary, were invited to attend. Agencies who were unable to attend were invited to provide information regarding the support they provide to feed into the review.

As part of local authority shared services, the partnership forum includes representatives from a wide range of public, private, community and voluntary organisations working across both East Hampshire District Council and Havant Borough Council areas. The aim was to seek information to map out the existing support and service provision that contributes to the prevention and relief of homelessness across the two authorities. The purpose also was to identify issues which hampered support to those who were homeless or threatened with homelessness and consider ways in which these could be overcome or improved.

The outcome of this process enabled us to identify the areas of work which need to be included in the strategies action plan. It is also envisaged that the action plan will remain in the ownership of not just the council, but also the Homelessness Partnership Forum who will continue to meet to discuss and develop ways in which to reduce homelessness within the district and provide the most appropriate services to those in need.

The ethos of the Homelessness Reduction Act is that ‘homelessness prevention is everyone’s business’ which is particularly reflected in the Duty to Refer where public bodies are expected to identify within their service those users who may be homeless or threatened with homelessness and refer to housing services for advice and assistance as early as possible.

The Homelessness Reduction Act also places a more holistic approach to an individual’s housing needs, not only to identify why they are homeless, but also what support needs they may have that require addressing which could prevent them becoming homeless now or in the future. There is therefore an even more imperative need for services to work under a multi-agency approach as Housing Services cannot meet all the complex needs of individuals in isolation.

The questions put to the attendees included:

Q1 What arrangements/resources does your organisation have in place to support the homeless/those threatened with homelessness?

Q2 What barriers/issues have you encountered when trying to support homeless households?

Q3 What more needs to be done to overcome these barriers?

Key points:

* Organisations and agencies have seen an increase in demand for their services from single males.
* Universal Credit – roll out is relatively new and the impact cannot be measured at this time. Local Housing Allowance continues to be frozen and has no relevance on rental amounts being charged.
* Limited funding available for non-priority single applicants.
* Applicants with Mental Health issues have increased, and support has been reduced.
* A shortage of accommodation in the social housing sector, which is affordable. Most new build properties are let as Affordable Rents, and can be above the local housing allowance and therefore not affordable for families on limited income.
* Lack of Private Rented accommodation which is within LHA levels. Landlords unwilling to offer accommodation to customers on welfare benefits.
* Increase in customers with former rent arrears and debts.
* Most approaches require financial assistance – how is this sustainable.

All services also need to examine why customers disengage and review their practices to ensure that re-engagement is possible when the individual is ready to do so, not continue to work on a ‘three strikes and you’re out’ basis. Understanding that individuals, especially those with complex needs, will take some time to engage effectively.

Services experience customers with very complex needs which are difficult to address because of their lifestyle choices and behaviours and their lack of life skills, such as being able to manage budgets etc.

It is imperative that all services are aware of what help, and assistance is available to our customers to help to start to address some of these issues and make appropriate referrals and signposting so that the support they need can be obtained. No one service can assist and individual in isolation, we all must work in partnership to put a team around the person to tackle the complex issues together.

Services are also finding that customers have unrealistic expectations of what is available regarding their housing options – what type of accommodation is available, in which areas, an unwillingness to consider short term supported or shared accommodation before moving on to a more settled solution, expectations about the availability of social housing.

We always strive to give customers as many housing options and choices as is available to them, but unfortunately the options are not always what the individual wants. We need to make sure that we carefully manage these expectations by being honest with customers about what is available and how, whilst it may not be what they ultimately want, it is a step to a move on pathway to a better housing solution in the long run.

The Hampshire Home Choice allocations scheme is a method by which we can manage applicant’s expectations regarding social housing. All social housing properties are advertised for letting through the scheme, so applicants can see what is available. Feedback of lettings is also available through the website showing realistic waiting times for property types and areas, so applicants can consider their bidding strategies accordingly in order to optimise their prospects of rehousing through the scheme.

Many services refer to the difficulties in trying to support customers who have both mental health and substance misuse issues often finding that mental health services will not support whilst substance misuse issues are still apparent.

It was felt that some work needs to be done around a dual diagnosis service and training for services to gain awareness of how to support these customers better.

There was also some concern about those individuals who make a life-style choice of being homeless, those ‘professional homeless’ who choose to rough sleep and beg despite the offer of assistance from services of shelter and support.

This can be picked up in the strategy action plan as a piece of work that can be continued to ensure that the homeless are supported in an appropriate way.

**Service Provision and Agency Working** – views and comments

Concern was raised about the ongoing cuts to services which was resulting in a lack of resources – for example the reduction of housing support in hostels and the community.

The Council recognises the pressures that these funding reductions create and is keen to utilise the Flexible Homeless Support Grant awarded to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 to see what measures can be put in place to ensure the right services are in place to support those faced with homelessness.

It is also paramount that we are aware of each other’s resources and what services we provide so that we are not duplicating processes and using resources ineffectively, but rather working together to pool resources where possible, and provide services more cost effectively.

Data Protection, GDPR and sharing information can be a barrier between services, particularly where consent to share is either not routinely gathered correctly, or obtained too late to provide early and effective support to individuals.

Services need to ensure therefore that their data sharing protocols and privacy notices are robust enough not only to meet lawful requirements but also to ensure information can be shared early enough between services to allow effective interventions to be offered.

Some services experience a high turnover of staff, particularly in areas such as social care.  This can be detrimental to both the individual receiving the service where relationships have been built up and lost, or to another agency trying to liaise with customers support worker, with duty officers not always able to help as effectively as the case holder.

Services need to examine why their staff turnover is high and what is impacting on their staff retention.  For other services to be able to liaise effectively on behalf of a customer, services need to ensure that access and referrals in to their services are clear and transparent, and that their structures and points of contact are readily available, such as through websites.

Throughout any discussions about barriers to services, communication is always a strong theme – lack of communication between agencies about what each service provides; how to access services; who is working with individuals that need to be involved in multi-agency meetings; lack of joint and partnership working; and lack of information being shared between services about individuals (for example when making referrals for assistance).

It is imperative that services work together more effectively, both for the benefit of the customer, but also to work more effectively to preserve limited resources.  Joint working needs to be embedded in the culture all services as none of us can work in isolation when dealing with individuals with multi-faceted needs.

We must all look to see how we can better work together, ensure we attend multi-agency meetings and take responsibility for building networks and relationships with our partner agencies with the intention of improving communications.

This is something the Council can achieve by ensuring that their website is up to date with this information.

The Housing Manager is also keen to visit other services, perhaps through their team meetings, to give an overview of what Housing Services are provided and how individuals can be assisted with their housing issues.

Other organisations have also been welcomed to attend Housing Services team meetings to reciprocate so that we can learn about their services too.  Putting faces to names or visiting other organisations places of work is also useful in building relationships and understandings of each others services and resources.

There has been some concern with organisations knowing who to sign post individuals to for further support. With such a plethora of information and services available, knowing about all of them can be difficult.

Websites such as the Connect to Support Hampshire can be a starting point or Citizens Advice who often provide links to other services, but it is imperative that services make use of digital technology and ensure their website and media pages are clear in what services they can provide and how organisations and individuals can refer for support.

As an action point, Housing Services can ensure that their webpages are not only clear about what services they can provide, but also provide clear links to other services who can provide support with the many issues that affect someone who is faced with homelessness.

Plans are being considered to catalogue the voluntary and community support available to the homeless so that this can be made available on East Hampshire District Council website along with the information available on rough sleepers and the SWEP/Streetlink provisions.

There was concern raised about the unpredictable and short notice discharges from hospital for individuals facing homelessness with services having little or no time to respond.

It was envisaged that the newly introduced Duty to Refer, with inpatient hospitals being one of the named public bodies with a responsibility to refer, would see a reduction in this happening and with patients being discharged being referred to services in a more timely manner.

Some services were concerned about the location of emergency accommodation (B&B) with some establishments outside of the district and the impact this can have on households, particularly those with local employment, children in schools or needing to be near local networks for support.

The Council recognises that this is an issue and in all cases, seeks to find the best housing solution for individuals within the resources available. Where this is not possible and placements out of borough need to be made, the Council will endeavour to move people back as soon as possible.

To combat this, Housing Services continues to look for more appropriate housing solutions and will endeavour to work more closely with housing providers, as explained earlier, to try and develop more housing options for individuals which will negate the need for moves to unsuitable, temporary accommodation.

In the meantime, Housing Services will always strive to ensure that if placed out of district, individuals are provided with access to services and support that will reduce the impact on their household.

As already mentioned, there was concern about the relative insecurity of housing tenure within the private rented sector. One recommendation was that other models of tenancy are created that have longer terms available than the current standard six or twelve month Assured Shorthold Tenancy. These matters are, of course, outside of local government control and would require central government amendments to the current legislative framework.

Ministers have acknowledged this issue and stated that due to the significant changes in the private rented sector over the last 30 years, e.g. a 50% increase in the number of households with children renting in this sector, there was a need to address the question of short term contracts, unaffordable rent rises, and the possibility of retaliatory eviction if tenants complained.

In July 2018, the Ministry for Housing, Communities, and Local Government, published its consultation paper Overcoming the Barriers to Longer Tenancies in the Private Rented Sector. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/721556/PRS\_Longer\_Tenancies\_Consultation.pdf

The Minister confirmed that he was seeking views on a new model – one that balances the tenants’ need for protection, with landlords’ needs to regain their property when their circumstances change; a model that gives tenants certainty over rents, and retains the flexibility that many desire.

The consultation closed on the 26th August 2018 and the government is currently analysing the feedback it has received.

In the meantime, to help mitigate this issue, a positive measure announced in the recent Housing White Paper means most tenants in the Build to Rent sector (a relatively new form of tenure but now included in the definition of affordable housing- NPPF July 2018) will be offered a minimum three-year tenancy.

With the introduction of the Localism Act 2011, social housing landlords were able to introduce fixed term tenancies to ensure that social housing continued to be provided to those with a housing need. In the main, fixed terms of five or six years are preceded by an introductory, or probationary tenancy, of one year, amounting to a secure period of at least six to seven years before a tenant’s need for social housing would be reviewed.

Most fixed terms were not introduced until around 2012, so we will only just start to see the impact this may have on any tenancies coming to an end where there may no longer be a need for social housing. However, the Council would expect to see social housing landlords providing robust advice and assistance to tenants who may need to move on and referring any such cases to Housing Services where homelessness may become a factor, in accordance with the Tenancy Strategies produced by local authorities as an outcome of the Act.

There appears to be a lot of confusion surrounding 16/17year olds and young care-leavers and which agency should be responsible for providing support. Whilst both cohorts would be afforded priority need status under the homelessness legislation, the duties to assist fall to two differing agencies - Children’s Social Care taking responsibility for young people who at 16 or 17 years old would still be minors, and local authority Housing Services having responsibility for care leavers once they have reached their 18th birthday.

The ‘Hampshire Joint Working Protocol between Housing and Children’s Services for 16 and 17-year olds in Housing Need’ seeks to clarify the duties and responsibilities for each organisation and has been reviewed to reflect the requirements under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

As part of its duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, housing services are responsible for ensuring that services for certain client groups (care leavers being one of them) have services tailored to their specific needs. This may include providing clear information about what can be provided and by who. Housing Services therefore need to ensure that its information available on its website, and to other services, clearly informs of this information.

Housing Services and Children’s services also need to work in partnership to carry out joint assessment, both for housing needs and any care needs, to support young people and therefore need to ensure that their services are geared up to do so.

It is recognised that there is a lack of night shelter accommodation in the district.

Whilst the numbers of rough sleepers in East Hampshire do not constitute the need for a night shelter on the scale as in other authorities, it is still recognised that street sleeping is not acceptable and for those few people who find themselves rough sleeping, there needs to be an alternative and local option, particularly in times of inclement weather.

East Hampshire District Council works closely with Two Saints to ensure that rough sleepers are supported and that accommodation in their homeless supported accommodation is utilised to its capacity. However, this is very limited.

There were concerns raised about funding and time-limits for those in refuges having fled domestic abuse.

The Council works proactively with Stop Domestic Abuse (SDA), the service commissioned by Hampshire County Council to provide domestic abuse services in the district. In doing so we can pool resources and support to ensure that individuals are able to find a suitable housing solution as soon as possible. Where this is not achievable, the Council can under its statutory homelessness duties, see what further assistance can be given with providing accommodation.

Whilst the domestic abuse services have only just recently been recommissioned, this is something that can be fed back to commissioning managers so that they are aware of the issues of short stay accommodation when revising the service provision requirements in future.

There were similar concerns with the Probation Services Approved Premises which only provide short -term provision and there appears to be little move-on help until the last minute.

There is again a need for Probation as a public body to refer to Housing Services any individuals leaving their accommodation with no further accommodation available to them at an earlier stage, and not leave it until the last minute as is perceived.

This will ensure that a Housing Needs Assessment can be carried out as soon as possible so all housing options available can be explored in a timely manner.

Having to meet local connection criteria before being able to access help from housing services and having to apply to specific housing authorities was also flagged as a concern.

Under the Localism Act 2011 Councils were able to formulate their allocation policy criteria to consider local requirements. As such many, if not all, placed a requirement that applicants had to establish a local connection to their district before they would be eligible to apply for social housing. Prior to publishing allocations policies, local authorities would have carried out consultation and considered any comments on the proposals to introduce a local connection.

Whilst requiring a local connection to a district may impact on an individual’s ability to secure social housing, it does not preclude other housing options which can be pursued such as looking for private rented accommodation, which carries no such restrictions.

Regarding having to establish a local connection if presenting as homelessness, this is set in legislation and not at the local authority’s discretion. However, local authorities do have the power to waver this requirement in exceptional circumstances.

With resources being stretched, thresholds for services increasing and waiting times lengthening, there was also concern raised at the lack of a sufficient provision of adult social care and delays caused by waiting for the outcome of assessments.

Under the Care Act, Adult Social Care do have a responsibility to carry out care assessments and enable the provision of appropriate care to meet those needs.

If Adult Social Care is unable to provide assessment and support as quickly as possible, services may need to look for other options to fill the gap in the meantime. Other agencies dealing with individuals with care needs due to age, ill health, learning disabilities or mental health issues may be better placed to assist in the short term.

It is for this reason that websites such as Connect to Support Hampshire have been devised to enable individuals to self-care, or look for interim support to help with care until full assessments of needs can be carried out.

There was some thought that social landlords should be more proactive with signposting early to support services and that they work more closely with local services before acting to evict households ensuring support is put in place to deal with the issues that lead many to lose their tenancies.

As mentioned earlier in this document, social landlords who have housing stock in East Hampshire all have a commitment to provide tenancy support to prevent residents losing their tenancies. This coupled with the Ministry of Justices Repossession Protocol, which registered providers need to adhere to before taking repossession action means that they strive to do all they can to prevent having to take repossession action.

However, social housing landlords must not rely on their in-house tenancy support provisions alone and must strive to involve other agencies and services as early as possible, not just at the point of eviction.

Whilst social housing providers are not recognised as a public body and therefore not bound by this duty, the National Housing Federation (NLA) has been working with its members who were keen to support the implementation of the Act regardless. As such, the NLA has produced a Commitment to Refer which social housing landlords can sign up to.

Housing Services in East Hampshire works very closely with its stock holding social housing providers to ensure that tenants who are facing eviction or referred for advice and assistance as early as possible.

It has also been recognised that some social landlords appear reluctant to take applicants with support needs, which appears at odds with such providers being ‘social’ landlords and therefore seen as being providers of accommodation to those most in need.

Unfortunately, with service reductions across both housing related support contracts and social housing landlord’s resources to provide support to tenants, there is naturally a reticence to consider allocating social housing accommodation to individuals whose needs may impact on their ability to successfully manage a tenancy.

It is therefore important when assessing housing needs and eligibility to join the register for social housing that Housing Services ensure that they identify the applicants that may have ongoing support needs and ensure that signposting and referrals to organisations and agencies who can support these individuals are made.

If robust support and engagement with support is in place at the time of allocation, the social housing providers are less likely to reject those with support needs.

On occasions applicants with support needs are skipped for accommodation if it is not deemed suitable to meet their needs. For example, for an applicant with support needs due to recovering from substance misuse, it would not be in the best interest to allocate a tenancy in a property where there are known anti-social behaviour or substance misuse issues having to be addressed by the landlord. This is likely to adversely impact the applicant’s ability to successfully manage their tenancy and retain their accommodation.

**Housing Supply**

As already mentioned, there was concern about the insecurity of housing tenure with the recommendation that other models of tenancies are created and longer tenancies given. These matters are outside of local government remit, but we are aware central Government is looking at this.

Further concerns were raised around the standard of accommodation that is available in the private sector and the perceived mismanagement of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO).

The Council’s Environmental Health Services Private Sector Housing Team works closely with landlords in the district to ensure that standards of accommodation are in line with the Housing, health and Safety Rating System, reducing the number of cat 1 hazards in accommodation wherever possible.

This team is also responsible for enforcing the recently reviewed HMO licensing regulations, to ensure that any mismanagement it was felt is occurring is driven out of the sector.

There was overwhelming concern at the lack of all types of affordable accommodation to meet the varying needs of those who are homeless or faced with homelessness in the district.

It was felt that there was a lack of accommodation in particular for:

* supported housing, particularly for the young and the old
* move-on accommodation for those already in supported housing
* a lack of rooms and issues with the safety of rooms/shared houses

Questions raised as to whether social housing landlords, as the stock holders within the borough, could help more with the provision of temporary accommodation, or whether other forms of housing provision could be looked such as porta cabins, as are being utilised in some other areas, and how we can make better use of empty properties and bring them back into use.

When trying to address the need for more housing provision, we need to be mindful of exactly what are needs are before we can look to see how they can be met. We then need to work with our partners to see how these can be achieved. For example, if a housing association has a stock of particularly difficult to let properties, is there scope for these to be used as temporary accommodation? And how can our partners help with move on accommodation for those who are ready to move on to independent living?

The Council continues and will continue to work with its registered providers through its allocation policy; support providers through the provision of hostel accommodation and how this can be increased; and with private sector landlords through its Supported Tenancy Scheme to endeavour to increase the housing supply to those who are facing homelessness.

**Financial Inclusion**

Concerns were raised with regard to the levels of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) which doesn’t currently meet the market rents being charged in the private rented sector. This makes looking at private rented accommodation as a housing option very restrictive to households who are benefit reliant or on low incomes.

There are also issues with the level of rent in advance, deposits and guarantors required to secure accommodation in the private rented sector which for some, is out of their financial reach.

The Council can continue to look at assisting households with financial support to secure private rented accommodation within its duties to prevent or relieve homelessness and ensuring that customers are signposted to receive money advice to sustain accommodation. Wherever possible, the Council will also bid for additional Government funding through its homelessness prevention initiatives to continue to support customers into accommodation, although ensuring that affordable accommodation is secured is still the challenge to be overcome.

It was also noted that housing associations are starting to ask for rent in advance for social tenancies, which can be of varying degrees from one week to up to six weeks. There have even been occasions when rent in advance has been asked before taking up supported accommodation. This may be manageable for those who have been waiting for some time for an offer through the Hampshire Home Choice housing waiting list and have had the opportunity to save for this eventuality, but for those who are being housed as a result of a homeless situation and have not had the ability to do so, this is a concern.

Again, the Council can continue to support customers who require financial assistance to secure accommodation in order to prevent homelessness, but a question as to whether housing associations could do more to assist with such requests, either allowing tenants a period of time to pay, or being more flexible with who has to meet these requirements if it can be evidenced that prospective tenants are already housing benefit/LHA eligible.

\*

To mitigate the financial risk to landlords in letting to customers on low incomes or benefit reliant – which has also been raised as a concern – it is suggested that rent guarantees or payments of housing benefit/LHA/UC housing element could be paid direct to the landlord. Such processes may help to encourage supply of this valuable resource.

Concerns were raised at the general complication of the welfare benefit system; the absence of a face-to-face service when having to apply for welfare benefit support and having to make applications by telephone or via a website; delays in payments of benefits and housing benefit; and welfare benefit sanctions and perceived ‘hostility’ towards jobseekers who do not or are unable to comply with their claimant commitment contracts.

The Council and its partners can continue to support welfare benefit claimants by ensuring that they are fully aware of the claiming process; what they need to provide in order to get their claims processed in a timely fashion and where claimants can go for support, particularly when sanctioned. The Council is also, through its Customer Services Team, is a point of contact for referrals from the DWP for those vulnerable customers who need assistance with making their UC claims.

It has also been noted that there is a lack of legal aid funding to support those needing help when threatened with homelessness. Advisors therefore need to be aware of the eligibility criteria for claiming legal aid and where to direct customers who may need support with identifying if they are eligible, such as to HCA.

Where customers aren’t eligible, advisors need to be aware of other advice support agencies who can assist with some form of legal advice such as the local authority’s housing services; HCA and organisations such as Shelter.

\*

Customers are also finding there is a lack of help with transport costs to access services or get to appointments they need to keep, either to comply with benefit claiming requirements or to engage with services that may be supporting them to prevent homelessness.

Again, there needs to be an all-round awareness among advisors across agencies and collation of what support is available to help in such circumstances and where this help can be obtained from to best support customers in need.

\*

From 1st August 2019 Hampshire Adult Social Care are reducing the funding for Social Inclusion Services across Hampshire by £1.8m. Homelessness Support Services (the collective name for Social Inclusion Services and the Winchester Night Shelter) are housing related support services for people over the age of 18 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This loss of the provision of early support is seen as a big concern which may lead to customers getting in to crisis and being unable sustain tenancies or secure interventions to prevent homelessness.

As a response Havant Borough Council is able to utilise funding from the Flexible Homelessness Prevention Grant awarded to develop measures required to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act to future fund a housing related support worker to bridge the gap created by this reduction of Social Inclusion funding.

**Public Perception and Involvement**

It was felt that there was a still a general unwillingness of private sector landlords to let to homeless households, that there was still a stigma surrounding homeless households particularly around young, single parent households.

More engagement with private sector landlords to encourage them to help homeless people was recommended and to manage the expectations of private sector landlords and encouraging them to offer help to those who are homeless.

The Accommodation Liaison Officer works in partnership with local lettings agents and landlords to source accommodation within the district and surrounding areas. Any tenancy supported by the scheme, will have been considered for its stainability and affordability. The on-going support is offered to both the landlord and tenant and can range from financial advice to sign-posting to support with other organisations and agencies and liaison between all parties.

Homelessness and worklessness was also raised as an issue.  It was difficult for services to help people in to employment if they were homeless - not having an address, not being able to prepare for interviews, and chaotic lifestyles impacting on ability to obtain and retain employment successfully.

On the flip side, it was also noted that not being in work could be a barrier to obtaining housing – landlords are more likely to take a working person over someone who is not working.

There was also some concern about services and landlords dealing with individuals with mental health problems, especially around the risks posed where insufficient information is available about the individuals condition, or treatment or risk posed, either to themselves or others.

Naturally there are constraints regarding what information can be shared about an individual’s health circumstances and GDPR further exacerbates the level of information that can be shared without the individual's explicit consent.

Services therefore need to work together to ensure that their sharing protocols are robust, and their privacy policies allow the necessary level of information to be shared between the services that are trying to support an individual – we cannot work in isolation when there are complex issues requiring multi-agency approaches and information sharing cannot be allowed to form a barrier to joined up working.

Services also need to be seeking up to date training and awareness to be able to deal with individuals with mental health issues so as not to be able to create their own barriers to providing support and assistance.

We must also not rely on stretched statutory services to provide support to individuals recognising that there are many community and voluntary services available, such as MIND or iTalk, and that these need to be utilised as much as possible.

**Service user feedback**

The Council carried out a telephone survey of customers who had approached the Council regarding housing. These individuals had either received Housing Advice, had their homelessness prevented or were placed into temporary accommodation. We contacted 26 households in group 1, 24 households in group 2 and 22 households in group 3. Key findings from this were:

2.1 Group One – Customers at the very start of their journey, accessing advice and assistance from the Housing Department:

· 80% customers knew to come to the council for assistance

· 33% customers came into the offices at Penns Place

· 50% customers phoned as first contact

· 17.5 % customers approached by letter first

· 66% customers felt it was fairly easy to access the housing service

· 33% customers felt it was very easy to access the housing service

· 50% customers felt their approach was dealt with in an average timescale

· 33% customers felt their approach was dealt with very quickly and efficiently

· 83% customers felt that the staff treated them politely and respectfully to a great extent

· 83% customers felt that the advice they received was very clear and helpful – one customer did not receive advice

2.1.1 Feedback from this group

· “Housing Advisory Officer was polite but negative”

· “Opening times are good”

· “Very nice staff”

2.2 Group Two – Customers accessing advice and assistance whilst in temporary accommodation:

· 60% customers knew to come to the council for assistance

· 60% customers phoned as first contact

· 40% customers came into the offices

· 80% customers found it very easy to access the housing service

· 60% customers felt their approach was dealt with very quickly and efficiently

· 100% customers felt that the staff treated them politely and respectfully to a great extent

· 60% customers felt that the advice they received was very clear and helpful

2.2.1 Feedback from this group

· “They were amazing and excellent”

· “I didn’t realise the accommodation was temporary until I signed the agreement”

· “I didn’t understand the bidding system straight away”

· “It all went really well”

2.3 Group Three - Customers accessing advice and assistance who have moved from temporary into permanent accommodation

· 83% customers knew to come to the council for assistance

· 66% customers came into the offices to access the housing service.

· 16% accessed the housing service by email first

· 16% accessed the housing service by phone first.

· 33% customers found it fairly easy to access the housing service

· 33% customers found it about average to access the housing service

· 33% customers found it very easy to access the housing service.

· 66% customers felt that the staff treated them politely and respectfully to a great extent

· 66% customers felt the advice was given as very clear and helpful

2.3.1 Feedback from this group

· “All do an amazing job”

· “Very grateful”

· “Very helpful”

· “Officer explained everything very well”

· “They made sure I understood.”

· “All great thanks”

3.0 Overall collective findings

· 70% of customers knew to come to the council for assistance.

· 47% of customers accessed the housing service by coming into the offices.

Feedback overall was very positive and complimentary with most customers finding the service easy to access with very clear and helpful advice.

However, there are some areas where we need to improve including:

· Promoting the services the Council provides so customers know to approach us when they experience housing issues.

· Look at ways to improve communications with other departments.

· Look at ways to improve the speed and efficiency customers are dealt with when approaching housing to ensure an above average experience for all.

· Continue to promote the need for more forms of suitable and affordable housing whether through social housing development or in partnership with the private rented sector.

**Moving forward**

**1.0 Successes over the past five years**

East Hampshire District Council has re-designed homelessness services over the past five years:

* Introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, all staff trained, IT in place
* Duty to Refer – consistent approach across Hampshire to ensure that process is easy to access.
* High prevention figures
* Review of the Social Inclusion contract following reduction in budget – new contracts were introduced in August 2019.
* Provision of a new building for temporary accommodation managed by Petersfield Housing Association in Alton.
* Employment of the Accommodation Liaison Officer role to increase the provision of private rented properties and work closely with landlords and letting agents to dispel issues or problems which may have resulted in notice being issued.
* Two Saints providing the Social Inclusion contract which includes East Hampshire.
* Richmond Fellowship providing the Mental Health Contract which includes East Hampshire.
* Raising the awareness of rough sleeping issues locally, attracting more partnership working with local churches and charities.
* Re-designing of office space to provide confidential office space for front-line officers delivering the HRA.
* Increase in Supported Lodgings – funded by East Hampshire District Council to offer more choice to young customers who need accommodation.
* Working with partners within Hampshire Home Choice to review the Allocations Framework considering legislation changes to make the allocation of social housing fairer and more transparent.
* More properties available through Registered Providers in new build properties with many developments planned for this year and the next.
* Review and introduction of a robust Out of Hours Service.
* Funding through the MHCLG to provide two Housing Support Officer roles within the Housing Options Team to assist with the HRA extended duties.

**2.0 Likely future levels of homelessness**

Planned national welfare benefit changes will have a negative impact on lower income households and the new benefit - Universal Credit has now been introduced within East Hampshire. The Government has made some significant changes in recent months due to some of the issues that were experienced by claimants in other parts of England and at this stage it is hard to say what this impact may be on rent arrears, relationship breakdowns and whether this will lead to an increase in homelessness.

Home ownership is increasingly out of reach for future generations and this will lead to increased demand for social housing. This in turn will result in increasing demands on private rented sector. Interest rates are low at the moment, but any upward changes will severely impact on owner-occupiers and could impact on buy to let landlords, who may either seek to sell or increase rent levels which could then put these properties out of reach of those in receipt of Local Housing Allowance or Housing Benefit.

There is concern that for East Hampshire there will be increased numbers of households making approaches for housing advice, looking to access more affordable housing locally and ultimately an increase in numbers of people threatened with homelessness. East Hampshire needs to respond to this challenge and Homelessness Strategy will set out the Councils plan for doing this

**Priorities for action**

This review has identified the following areas for action and these will become the basis for the priority areas in the Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy Action Plan, these include:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. The need for customers to engage earlier to allow interventions to be considered | * Continue to promote the Duty to Refer to public bodies and encourage non-public bodies to adopt a commitment to refer * Better promote the services available from Housing Services and how customers can engage at an early stage * Provide more robust awareness amongst professionals of the services Housing Services * Provide and how they can refer their customers at an earlier stage * Improve access to advice and assistance through the council website and the Hampshire Home Choice website |
| 2. The challenge of significant cuts to budgets previously distributed by Hampshire County Council including Social Inclusion Review with cuts totalling £2million. | * Map out local resources and services that can be used as an alternative. * Investigate possibility of inhouse Outreach Support – funded through Flexible Housing Grant |
| 3. Need for more private rented accommodation, as well as providing sufficient packages to assist those threatened with homelessness in accessing it. | * Ensure funding available for rent in advance, deposits/bonds and landlord fees. * Review PSH offer * Ensure that landlords are aware of additional support from Accommodation Liaison Officer. |
| 4. Shortfall in provision of affordable accommodation appropriate to the current and future needs of the district, including specialist accommodation | * Liaison with Planning and Development Teams, especially for adapted properties before building starts. Evaluate the suitability of non-traditional building systems to address the needs of disabled clients or families with a disabled child. * Delivery of more affordable units of accommodation, in particular the provision of more 1 bedroomed units. |
| 5. Need to develop services so that volumes can be more effectively managed. | * Monitoring and evaluation of service provision. * Identify good practice and innovation * Provide informal opportunities to communicate through round table discussions and web-based networks * Evidence what does and doesn’t work * Identify the barriers to improved efficiencies * Showcase case studies |
| 6. Agree on future top priorities for expenditure of Flexible Housing Grant | * Agree priorities and explore options for expenditure that offers the most value. * Confirm funding for single non-priority households for rent and deposits |
| 7. More joined up working between commissioned and non-commissioned services. | * Working in partnership is paramount and being aware of local resources and services who can assist is a necessity. * Closer working with local churches and church organisations. |
| 8. Shortfall in provision of temporary accommodation in area, primarily for singles and couples | * Reduce bed & breakfast usage as unsuitable and expensive. * Work with Development Team to explore other options which can provide emergency accommodation in the local area which would mean that contact with Housing Options & Advice can be easily maintained as can support from partner organisations and health professionals. * Evaluate the suitability of non-traditional building systems as an alternative option to bed & breakfast accommodation. |
| 9.Look at whether Housing First is a model that could be successful in East Hampshire. | * This option may be suitable for the more challenging complex households. * Discuss with registered providers. |
| 10. Better communication and multi-agency working between organisations. | * Attend and chair Homelessness Forum meetings. * More joint working to address the needs of more complex cases. Need more involvement with Adult Social Care and Children’s Services. |
| 11. Invest in staff to enable them to sustain their compassion and resilience | * Training needs to be identified * Joint training with other local authorities to reduce cost * Ensure Officers are kept up to date with changes in legislation. |
| 12. Understanding the needs of rough sleepers and managing the support offered | * Expand on annual rough sleeper count/estimate and carry out a robust needs analysis of those rough sleeping * Carry out analysis of data available on sofa surfing activity and target advice and assistance to prevent this slipping in to rough sleeping * Continue to work with statutory and non-statutory bodies and voluntary community groups to co-ordinate data about rough sleepers * Through joint work, encourage the safe practise of supporting rough sleepers through voluntary and community organisations rather than direct assistance to an individual |
| 13. Need to reduce use and the length of stay in B&B and reduce out of area placements | * Consider alternative initiatives for providing emergency and short-term accommodation – possible pods initiative and look at change of use |
| 14. Need for early accurate advice and advocacy before crisis point. | * Publication of our services and confirm contact details. * Promotion of Duty to Refer responsibilities |
| 15. Tackling public perceptions of homelessness and addressing stereotypes to ensure that access to accommodation is increased. | * Ensure website information is easy to access and regularly updated. * Investigate possibility of “Tenancy Training” to demonstrate skills obtained and ensure applicants can manage a tenancy- to minimise risk to Registered Providers it can also demonstrate that an individual has changed behaviour and is ready to move into accommodation. * Managing expectations/education around homelessness and ensure that communities are aware that our focus will be on preventing homeless and not accessing social rented properties. |
| 16. Affordability and Welfare Reform | * Close monitoring of Universal Credit will be required. * Close partnership working with Registered Providers, DWP and the private sector, so that housing services are aware of issues that may lead to homelessness at the earliest opportunity |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 17. Lack of affordable social and private rented accommodation | * Continue to encourage the development of social/affordable housing with developers and registered providers * Continue to work with registered providers to ensure the best use of stock within the borough through creative letting and local lettings plans * Continue to work with private sector landlords to encourage the availability of suitable accommodation |
| 17. Managing the expectations of customers as to the housing options available | * Ensure we have a comprehensive package of housing options available to meet diverse needs * Ensure options available are transparent and explained so informed choices can be made * Ensure other professional organisations are aware of the housing options available so as not to misinform their customers |
| 18. Ensure Executive Board/Cabinet and Cllrs are kept informed and aware of changes in legislation and the homelessness profile | * Regular briefings * Management information * Offer of shadowing the team |

**Appendix 1 organisations we work with and consulted with**

|  |
| --- |
| **Organisation** |
| Age UK |
| Astor Group |
| Christians against Poverty |
| Citizens Advice |
| Community First |
| Community Mental Health Teams x 2 |
| DWP |
| Elmleigh Hospital |
| Food Banks |
| Guinness Housing Group |
| Home Group |
| Housing Benefits |
| Hyde Group |
| Inclusion |
| MIND |
| Orion Centre |
| Police |
| Probation |
| Petersfield Housing Association |
| Radian |
| Richmond Fellowship |
| Adult and Children’s Services |
| Stop Domestic Abuse |
| Sovereign |
| SSAFA |
| Salvation Army |
| Step by Step |
| Supporting Families |
| Two Saints |
| VIVID |
| Winchester Night Shelter |

**Appendix 2**

Grant funding received from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to support homelessness initiatives and measures:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Purpose of Funding** | 2018 - 19 | 2019 - 20 |
| New Burdens | £25,997 | £25,172 |
| Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG) | £196,195 | £263,462 |
| Top up to FHSG | N/A | £73,000 |
| Rough Sleeper Initiative | N/A | £35,000 (Joint funding with Havant Borough Council) |
| TOTAL | £222,192 | £396,634 |

This grant funding is to be used to support any initiatives/projects which will prevent or relieve homelessness. The funds, apart from the RSI can be carried forward if not spent in year – **at the present time there have been no further indications of whether there will be continued funding for 2020 and future years.**

To date the grant has been used for the following initiatives :-

Additional Staffing – 2 members of staff on fixed term contracts

SLAs with Two Saints to provide flexible Community Support following on from the reduction of £2.2m from the Hampshire CC Social Inclusion budget.

SLA with Two Saints to provide outreach to those in B&B outside the area.

2 x Supported lodgings placements

Loans and deposits to enable renting in the private sector.

Incentives to PRS Landlords

IT upgrades to ensure compliance with completing government statistics.

New initiatives identified in the review and contained within the Action Plan will be supported by this grant.

**Appendix**

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING STATEMENT 2018 – 2020**

****

**Mission**

To improve people’s lives by increasing the supply of affordable housing across a range of tenures ensuring all sections of society in need have access to a home.

**Priorities**

This Affordable Housing Statement supports the delivery of the Council’s Corporate Strategy 2014-2019.  The Strategy contains five operational priority areas namely; Financial Stability, Economic Growth, Delivering Excellence in Public Service, Environmental Sustainability and Creativity and Innovation, and it’s these priorities that run as a golden thread through our work in the housing sector.

The Council has set a number of key priorities for the next two years with ambitious targets that will ultimately be the measure of our success.  These targets will remain forefront in our minds in the delivery of the housing service and the provision of new affordable housing.



**Supply of new homes**

Priority: Increase the supply of affordable housing within the district by supporting Registered Providers, Housing Associations, House Builders and other stakeholders in the sector to build new homes.  This support will take the form of a firm, but fair approach to negotiating s106 agreements, with a pragmatism that recognises the challenges house builders and providers face in the sector.  We’ll remove barriers to development so stakeholders regard East Hampshire as a priority investment area, making Council funds available to support affordable housing delivery where required.

Target: **500**new affordable homes built in the district by April 2020

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Priority: To ensure that the sector builds affordable housing of the right size, type and tenure that meets the housing need as identified by the Council.  Changes introduced in the Welfare Reform Act and Housing and Planning Act have caused Registers Providers to rethink the size, type and tenure of affordable housing.  This priority will ensure the Council robustly defends attempts by housing providers to build homes that do not serve the needs of communities well.

Target: **50%** of all new affordable homes to be 2 bedroom houses

**10%** of all new affordable homes to comprise social rent, rent to buy, shared equity or non-industry standard forms of tenure.  Greater tenure diversity is required beyond typical affordable rent and shared ownership to deliver the mission.

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Priority: Providing access to affordable housing in rural communities, where an identifiable need exists.  Planning policy enables affordable homes to be built in the countryside, outside of settlement boundaries, subject to strict criteria.  The Council will maintain accurate housing needs data to support planning applications that deliver the right size, type and tenure of affordable housing in the right places where need is greatest.

Target: **50** affordable homes to receive planning permission on sites outside of settlement boundaries

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Priority: Some types and tenures of affordable housing are considered to be unaffordable to low income households or those dependent upon welfare.  The Government has reacted to this and is once again promoting social rented housing typically set at target rents of c.50% of private rents.  It is a priority that social rented housing is promoted as well as other initiatives that deliver ‘genuinely’ affordable housing.

Target: Work with Registered Providers, Planning Officers and Members to reintroduce social rent and affordable rent that has regard to local incomes, into adopted planning and s106 policy.

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Priority: To shape and influence housing policies contained within the Development Plan to ensure that they accurately reflect the housing needs of the district.

Target: To strengthen links with and provide advice to Development Management and Planning Policy Officers and consultants working on the Local Plan Review.

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Priority: Keeping Members informed and consulting with them on new affordable housing initiatives is an integral part of Local Government and the smooth operation of the Council.

Target: Attend Portfolio Holder update meetings, as required, and ensure officer representation at the Affordable Housing and Development Policy Panel.



**Housing Investment**

Priority: To invest Council funds in innovative new models of providing affordable housing that not only provide a wide range of tenures to support the mission, but that offer a financial return to the Council.

Target: To invest £1,000,000 in affordable housing that provides capital or revenue returns to be used to support Council services that improve people’s lives and the delivery of additional affordable homes.

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Priority: To generate revenue from affordable housing investment to support Council services.

Target: To hit a revenue target of £150,000 over two years.

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Priority: To advise and support other Local Authorities or organisations, when staff resources permit, by offering chargeable consultancy services to generate income for the Council that contributes towards the revenue target.

Target: Support Fareham Borough Council on affordable housing commissions relating to the planning application for the garden village proposal at Welbourne, Fareham.

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Priority: Flat pack and pod type modular housing is becoming more common place in the market, with many new manufacturers offering extensive ranges of accommodation to suit various applications.  This type of accommodation may provide an innovative housing solution for the district, with an opportunity for the Council to invest in and subsequently benefit from an on-going revenue stream.  It will be a priority to conduct a feasibility study on a pilot scheme using a pod / flat pack type system.

Target: Complete a feasibility study as a real-life scenario on a site that has a reasonable prospect of being both available and achieving a planning consent on.



**Hampshire Home Choice**

**Allocations Framework**

28/05/2019

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# Hampshire Home Choice Allocation Framework

## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 East Hampshire District Council, Eastleigh Borough Council, Havant Borough Council, Test Valley Borough Council and Winchester City Council (known as the Councils in this document), have agreed a common approach for the allocation of social housing across the five local authority areas and together operate a sub-regional choice based lettings scheme called Hampshire Home Choice (HHC).

1.2 Local authorities are required to establish an allocation scheme for determining priorities between people who apply for housing and setting out the procedure to be followed in allocating housing accommodation.

1.3 The HHC Allocations Framework is a jointly agreed policy which details all aspects of the allocation process, including the responsibility for decisions, policy on offering choice to applicants, how applications will be assessed, processed and how decisions will be made across the HHC partnership, as per the operational procedures.

1.4 Each local authority will continue to maintain its own local authority Scheme of Allocations which may contain separate policies to address and reflect local priorities.

1.5 The provision of social housing in Havant Borough Council is unusual and special arrangements exist. Portsmouth City Council owns and manages 5000 social housing tenancies located within the borough of Havant. Therefore Havant and Portsmouth City Councils have agreed the following arrangements for the allocation of social housing in Havant:

* Portsmouth City Council tenants do not qualify for registration on the Hampshire Home Choice Housing Register.
* Portsmouth City Council tenants housing needs will be assessed by Portsmouth City Council.
* In exceptional circumstances, Hampshire Home Choice may agree to assist a Portsmouth City Council tenant to move, on a reciprocal basis only.

1.6 In establishing the priorities of applicants for allocating accommodation, HHC gives reasonable preference under this scheme to eligible and qualifying:

1. Applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness (as defined by the homelessness legislation) or are owed a re-housing duty under the homelessness legislation.
2. Applicants occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions.

1. Applicants who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds related to a disability).

1. Applicants who need to move to a particular locality in the district, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or others (including applicants seeking to move under the Right to Move Regulations–see appendix 3 – HHC Operational Procedures).

1. People specified by the Secretary of State by regulations, *unless* the applicant only qualifies for reasonable preference by taking into account a restricted person (See section 10).
   1. Additional preference can be awarded to applicants who are in a reasonable preference group if their housing needs are serious and urgent.
   2. There may be exceptional circumstances where the only way an exceptional housing need can be resolved is through the use of discretion. In the interests of fairness to all these applicants these circumstances are kept to a minimum.

Where discretion is applied to an applicant’s circumstances or their case falls outside of the HHC Framework these cases will be referred to the Housing Manager/Head of Housing Management & Allocations at the relevant Council to make a decision in relation to qualification, band priority or bedroom need.

* 1. The HHC scheme may contain provisions for determining priorities between people in reasonable preference groups. Applicants entitled to reasonable preference will be further assessed against the following:

a) The financial resources available to an applicant to meet his/her housing costs.

b) The behaviour of an applicant (or a member of his household) which affects their suitability to be a tenant.

c) The local connection of the applicant to the HHC local authority districts.

* 1. This document sets out the HHC Sub-Regional Allocations Framework, which has been agreed with all Registered Providers (RPs) with which the Councils have nomination arrangements, local voluntary and statutory agencies, housing applicants and tenants on the HHC Housing Register.
  2. Partner Registered Providers of social housing in the HHC scheme have a duty under Housing Act 1996 to cooperate with housing authorities to such extent as is reasonable in the circumstances in offering accommodation to applicants with priority under this scheme.
  3. The Councils have also had regard to the following:

* The Housing Act 1996 (Part 6), as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, the Localism Act 2011 and other relevant legislation.
* Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Housing Authorities in England (2012, DCLG) “the Code”.
* Providing social housing for local people: Statutory Guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England (DCLG, December 2013) “Supplementary Code”.
* Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
* Allocation of Housing (Procedure) Regulations 1997,SI 1997/483.
* Allocation of Housing (England) Regulations 2002, SI 2002/3264. • Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006, SI 2006/1294.
* Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012, SI 2012/1869.
* Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed forces) (England) Regulations 2012, SI 2012/2989.
* Allocation for Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015, SI 2015/967.
* Each Councils Homelessness Strategy.
* Each Councils Tenancy Strategy.
* The Equality Act 2010.
* Existing Case Law.

1.13 The Councils also consulted with applicants and Registered Providers.

## 2. Aims and Objectives of Hampshire Home Choice

2.1 Aims of HHC

To meet the housing needs of households across the sub-region. Providing a single point of access to applicants, assisting social and economic mobility and access to employment where possible, being sufficiently flexible to reflect and address local issues and to allocate housing in a consistent and as transparent way as possible.

2.2 Objectives of HHC

1. To meet statutory housing requirements.
2. To give reasonable preference to those in greatest housing need across the sub-region.
3. To meet the needs of vulnerable people with support.
4. To provide applicants with as much choice as possible.
5. To help to create and maintain sustainable local communities.
6. To make the best use of available housing resources.
7. To allocate scarce local housing resources in as fair a way as possible.

1. **Section 1 - The Hampshire Home Choice Allocations Framework Policy** 
   1. HHC administers a single Housing Register for people in housing need across the HHC sub-region. The HHC Housing Register is used by the five partner local authorities to nominate and allocate social housing across the sub-region. This information is shared with the partner RPs (which includes local authority landlords).
   2. An allocation under Hampshire Home Choice takes place where:
      1. A person is selected to be a secure or introductory tenant of Winchester City Council or nominated by one of the five participating local authorities to be an assured tenant (including fixed-term, flexible, or Affordable Rent tenure) of a Registered Provider of social housing in the HHC sub-region.

* + 1. There is a transfer of housing accommodation where a Council or Registered Provider/Housing Association tenant is in a reasonable preference group and where the transfer has been made on the basis of the need expressed in a person’s housing application.
  1. The letting of accommodation to applicants not in a reasonable preference group or of temporary housing for homeless applicants will normally be made outside of this framework.
  2. Tenancies let through Hampshire Home Choice will include flexible and shorthold tenancies and tenancies let on social and Affordable Rents.

## 4. Cross Boundary Moves

4.1 Local authorities can agree on a voluntary basis to advertise a property as being available for a cross boundary move which would allow applicants across the five Council areas to be considered for the property as well as homes in the local authority in which the applicant has a local connection.

These properties will be clearly labelled in the property adverts and it will be very clear for which properties the applicant can and cannot bid.

## 5. Statement of Choice

5.1 The Councils and its partner landlords are fully committed to enabling applicants to play an active role in choosing where, and in what property type and tenure in which they wish to live, while continuing to house those applicants in the greatest housing need and complying with all relevant legislation.

5.2 Under the Hampshire Home Choice scheme, applicants can apply (subject to eligibility) for vacancies which are advertised each week. In making this choice applicants need to consider their housing need priority against the availability of properties in any given area.

## 

## 6. 6. Homelessness

6.1 The HHC scheme recognises the need for flexibility when addressing local priorities and pressures. Each Council will retain strategic control of the way social housing is allocated in its area and ability to manage its homelessness responsibilities.

6.2 Applicants with a qualifying local connection who are owed the prevention or relief duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 or have been accepted under Part 7 of The Housing Act 1996 (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002) or Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 by one of the Councils and owed a full duty to house under the homelessness legislation will only be able to bid for properties in the Council area where the homelessness duty is owed.

6.3 Applicants with a qualifying local connection who are owed the prevention or relief duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 or owed a full duty under Part 7 of Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) or Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and are placed in temporary accommodation will be expected to bid for suitable properties. If the applicant does not bid for suitable properties, then the local authority will bid on their behalf and make a suitable offer of a vacant property within their district.

## 7. Village Properties

7.1 Special rules will apply when prioritising applicants who are being considered for housing in a village/parish. All village vacancies (S106 and non S106) will be advertised with priority given to those with a local connection to the village/parish (less than 3,000 population).

7.2 Village/parish local connection is defined as follows:

* Ordinarily resident in the village/parish.
* Previously ordinarily resident in the village/parish prior to the date of allocation and has family who ordinarily reside there.
* Employment – current or to take up permanent employment in village/parish.
* To support or be supported by member of family ordinarily resident in the village/parish.
  1. Applicants who do not meet any of the above criteria will not have a local village/parish connection.
  2. When allocating properties suitable for wheelchair users, or with any other adaptations which are not subject to a S106 agreement, to make best use of available housing resources priority may be given to applicants who have an assessed housing need for the adaptations; but who do not meet the village local connection criteria. In certain circumstances, the Council will allocate an adapted property directly to an applicant which is known as a direct match.

## 8. Local Lettings Policies

8.1 Local lettings policies will be used to ensure, where possible, that there is a mixed and balanced community. Local letting policies for some existing properties and initial lettings on new build schemes may specify different priorities for allocating properties. Properties subject to such a policy will be clearly labelled in the property advert.

8.2 Local lettings policies may be applied in addition to any local planning restrictions (contained in agreements made under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) which may be in place, but will not override them. These local lettings policies will be agreed by the respective Registered Provider and local authority Housing Manager.

## 9. Sensitive Lettings

9.1 There may be occasions when a Registered Provider in the HHC partnership requests that a vacant property is advertised as a sensitive letting; for example, where a previous tenant has caused anti-social behaviour and it is important to get the right mix of tenants in the area, having regard to the needs of existing vulnerable or elderly tenants. The landlord and the local authority may agree that the applicant in prime position for nomination is not suitable to be offered the property and instead agree to offer the property to a more suitable applicant (See Appendix 1- Sensitive Lettings).

9.2 Priority may be given to working applicants taking into account all relevant factors in relation to the applicant's housing need, suitability of the property for that applicant and the needs of the community. In these cases the advert will clearly state the property is subject to a Sensitive Lettings Policy.

## 10. Eligibility for the Hampshire Home Choice Register

10.1 Certain people from abroad, including some subject to immigration control, are not eligible for an allocation of social housing. These are known as restricted persons. These regulations are set by Government and updated regularly.

10.2 Allocations and nominations under the HHC scheme can only be made to eligible persons. The Councils which participate in Hampshire Home Choice cannot allocate housing accommodation under the scheme to:

1. A person from abroad who is subject to immigration control unless he/she is of a class prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State, or currently a tenant of the Council or a Registered Provider. No person excluded from entitlement to housing benefit shall be included in any class prescribed by the secretary of State.
2. Two or more persons jointly if any of them falls under 10.2 (1) above
3. Other classes of persons from abroad specified by the Secretary of State.
   1. Habitual Residence Test

Most persons from abroad who are not subject to immigration control (including British Citizens) must also be habitually resident in the Common Travel and/or have the right to reside in the Common Travel Area in order to be eligible to join the Housing Register.

The Common Travel Area consists of the UK, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and the Republic of Ireland.

The Habitual Residence Test is used to ensure new allocations of social housing is to the applicants who are ordinarily resident in the UK, i.e. those habitually resident in the UK, and to EEA nationals exercising Treaty Rights. In applying this test, some British citizens, nationals of EEA member states, and others exempt from immigration control may nevertheless be denied an allocation on the grounds that they are ‘not eligible’. The Test can be reapplied at a later date and a different outcome may arise.

* 1. Subject to section 1 and any other relevant regulations made by the Secretary of State, the Councils participating in HHC may decide what classes of people are to be treated as qualifying persons; able to join the Hampshire Home Choice Register and to be considered for housing accommodation.
  2. Applicants deemed not to be a qualifying person by the Councils will not be able to be considered for housing and must be notified in writing.
  3. Any applicant regarded by the Councils as ineligible to join the Housing Register may request a review of this decision (See 22.12: Right to Review).

## 11. Qualification for inclusion on the Hampshire Home Choice Register

11.1 The Councils will consider all applications to join the Hampshire Home Choice Register in accordance with this scheme. Applicants will be accepted onto the HHC Register for housing provided they:

1. Are aged 16 years of age or over and
2. Are eligible to be considered for housing accommodation and
3. Are a qualifying person and
4. Have a local connection with one of the Councils.

11.2 *Applicants under the age of 18 years of age*;

Applicants aged 16 or 17 years of age will be accepted onto the HHC Register, providing they are not otherwise ineligible. When allocating a tenancy to an applicant under the age of 18, then:

1. A trustee must be appointed. A person under the age of 18 cannot be the legal owner of an interest in land, including a tenancy. The trustee would be the legal owner of the land and hold it in trust until the young person reached 18 years of age. Any such case will need to be jointly assessed by the Housing Service and Children’s/Adult Services before an offer of accommodation is made, and
2. A suitable guarantor for the tenancy would need to be identified until the applicant reaches 18 years of age.

11.3 Qualification Criteria

An applicant will normally be a qualifying person and therefore qualify to join the HHC Register and for an allocation under the HHC Scheme, if they are:

1. In Housing Need, (See Section 14 – Housing Need Assessment) and

1. Have a single or joint gross household income of less than £60,000 per annum or £45,000 for Eastleigh applicants and/or

1. Assets and/or savings of less than £16,000, and
2. Have a local connection to one of the local authority areas within the HHC sub-region by meeting one of the following criteria:

* 1. *Residency Qualification* 
     + Have been resident in the HHC sub-region for 12 continuous months at the time of application or
     + have lived in the HHC sub-region for 3 out of previous 5 years or
     + Have close family (mother, father, brother or sister, adult children, grandparents) who have been resident for 5 continuous years and continue to be resident in the HHC subregion.

* 1. *Employment*

An applicant may be a qualifying person if he/she or his/her partner is in employment which meets all of the following criteria:

* + - The office or business establishment at which a person is based or from where their work is managed is within the HHC sub-region and
    - Is in paid employment and
    - Works a minimum of 16 hours per week and
    - Has been employed for a minimum of 12 continuous months at the time of their application and is currently in employment and
    - Has a permanent or fixed term contract or is self-employed.

If an applicant or their partner is self-employed further information may be required including but not limited to evidence that they are registered with HMRC for tax and National Insurance payments, tax returns, payslips, accounts, etc.

An application can only be registered with one local authority usually the local authority, where the local connection criterion is met. If an applicant has a local connection to more than one local authority area within the HHC sub-region their application will reflect this.

## 12. Applicants who are not Qualifying Persons

12.1 Applicants will not normally be qualifying persons if they:

1) Do not have a local connection to the HHC sub-region **unless**, at the time of their application they are:

* Owed a re-housing duty by one of the five HHC participating local authorities under the homelessness legislation or
* A person who is serving in the regular forces or
* A person who has served in the regular forces within five years of the date of their application for an allocation of social housing under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 or
* Those who have recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person’s spouse or civil partner where –
  + The spouse or civil partner has served in the regular forces: and
  + Their death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service: or
  + Is serving or has served in the reserve forces and who is suffering from serious illness, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to that service.

For the purposes of this policy the definition of ‘regular’ and ‘reserve’ forces will be reflect the definition set out in s374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006.

* In a class of people prescribed by regulation who cannot be deemed a non-qualifying person due to a lack of connection to one of the local authority areas (for example MAPPA, MARAC, Witness Protection) or
* A care leaver aged under 21 who normally lives in a different area to that of a local authority that owes them leaving care duties, and has done for at least 2 years including some time before they turned 16 or
* A care leaver aged under 21 owed a duty under section 23C of the Children Act 1989 by Hampshire County Council will have a local connection with every district that falls within the area of Hampshire County Council or
* A person who needs to move to a particular locality within the HHC area, where failure to meet that need would cause themselves or others hardship or
* Social housing tenants who have reasonable preference because of a need to move to the local authorities’ district to avoid hardship; and need to move because the tenant works or has been offered work in the district of the authority and has a genuine intention to take up the offer.

1. Are an applicant who has the means to resolve their own housing difficulties.

3) Are an owner-occupier, (with the exception of those with a housing and assessed care need, who cannot resolve their own housing situation and have a need for extra-care or sheltered accommodation (See Appendix 2).

4) Are not in housing need, unless they are of a household type which could be considered for housing which is normally difficult to let and they wish to be considered for such a property. This will normally be extra-care or sheltered accommodation.

1. Are a Portsmouth City Council Tenant.

Portsmouth City Council tenants housing needs will be assessed by Portsmouth City Council.

In exceptional circumstances, Hampshire Home Choice may agree to assist a Portsmouth City Council tenant to move, on a reciprocal basis only.

## 13. Hampshire Home Choice Suspension Policy

13.1 HHC operates a suspension policy. Applications will be suspended in the following circumstances:

1. Where an applicant has deliberately worsened their circumstances or
2. Unacceptable behaviour or 3) Former rent arrears and/ or debt or

4) Refusal of suitable accommodation.

13.2 Deliberately Worsened their Circumstances

Applicants who seek to gain an advantage on the Housing Register by deliberately worsening their circumstances, for example, moving to severely overcrowded housing or sub-standard accommodation will have their housing application suspended for 6 months.

13.3 For applicants whose application has been suspended for deliberately worsening their circumstances (13.2), their priority date will be the date their application is made live following suspension for 6 months.

13.4 Unacceptable Behaviour

Qualifying persons who are unsuitable to be a tenant because of behavioural issues, including anti-social behaviour or poor tenancy or household management, will have their application suspended for six months. Applications will be assessed on their own merits.

Applicants and/or their household will need to demonstrate that there has been a significant change in their behaviour and that this has been sustained for a minimum period of 6 months before they may qualify for housing. In some cases an applicant may qualify, subject to them agreeing to accept tenancy support or signing an acceptable behaviour contract.

13.5 Behavioural issues include the following:

1. abusive and verbal behaviour and/or
2. arson and/or
3. assault and/or
4. criminal behaviour and/or
5. criminal damage and/or
6. damage to property and/or
7. domestic violence and/or
8. drug and alcohol misuse/abuse and/or (ix) [harassment](http://www.harassment.me.uk/) and/or (x) homophobic behaviour.

Applications will be assessed on their own merits, taking into account current and recent conduct along with relevant supporting information provided by partner organisations, support workers and the Police.

13.6 Former Rent Arrears and Debt

Where an applicant and/or their partner owe money to a local authority or Housing Registered provider and there is no payment arrangement in place, or there is a payment arrangement in place which has not been adhered to for a period of 6 months and the debt has not been paid, their application may be suspended. Examples of money owed include:

* + 1. Current rent arrears and/or
    2. Former tenant rent arrears and/or
    3. Repair costs/Rechargeable works orders and/or
    4. Claim against deposit scheme for damage or rent arrears and/or
    5. Rent in advance and or deposit scheme costs owing and/or
    6. Outstanding debt with a private landlord may be considered.
  1. It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide evidence confirming that there is a payment arrangement in place and that payments have been adhered to for a minimum period of at least 6 months and continue to be paid, or evidence of where serious hardship would result if accommodation is not offered.
  2. For applicants whose application has been suspended for former debt/rent arrears and debt (13.6), their priority date will be the date they cleared their outstanding debt or the Council is satisfied the applicant has adhered to a payment plan for 6 months.
  3. Refusal of Suitable Accommodation

An applicant, who successfully bids, is nominated and offered suitable accommodation but subsequently refuses an offer on two occasions within a six month period will not be able to bid for further properties for six months from the date of refusal of the second property.

## 14. Housing Need Assessment

14.1 Household Size and Accommodation Eligibility

The number of bedrooms an applicant can be considered for is determined by looking at the size and structure of the household. The table below details the normal bedroom requirements for typical households:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Household Size | Size of accommodation |
| Single Person | Bedsit/studio flat/one bedroom property |
| Couple | One bedroom property |
| Household with one child | Two bedroom property |
| Household with two children of same sex \* | Two bedroom property |
| Household with two children of opposite sex; where both children are under 10 years of age | Two bedroom property |
| Household with two children of same sex, where one sibling is over 16 years of age. | Three bedroom property |
| Household with two children of opposite sex, where one is 10 years or over. \*\* | Three bedroom property |
| Household with three children | Three bedroom property |
| Household with four or more children | Three/four bedroom  property |
| Household with five or more children | Four/five bedroom property |

1. \*Two siblings of the same sex under 16 years of age will be expected to share one bedroom of appropriate size.

1. \*\*Two siblings of opposite sex, where one is 10 years or over are entitled to separate bedrooms.
   1. Where an applicant states a separate bedroom is required for a carer/s providing overnight care, the Council will assess whether the carer is part of the household.
   2. In exceptional circumstances, the Council will consider allocating properties of alternative sizes to applicants. Such decisions will be referred to the Hampshire Home Choice Manager and relevant Council for consideration.

## 15. Health and Welfare Assessment

15.1 An applicant or household member who has a significant health or welfare problem caused or substantially worsened by their existing accommodation and where it could be alleviated or resolved by rehousing, maybe awarded priority on health and/or welfare grounds.

15.2 When awarding priority on health and/or welfare grounds, the award of urgent priority on these grounds need to be considered alongside the needs of other applicants who are waiting for rehousing.

1. **Additional Priority**

16.1 Additional priority may be given in the following circumstances:

## *(a) Fostering*

Additional priority may be given to foster carers where their current accommodation is not suitable to accommodate a foster child placement. An example is where an applicant may require a larger property to accommodate one or more foster children. In these cases the local authority will work closely with Children’s Services to meet the needs of an approved foster carer.

## *(b) Health and Welfare Assessment*

An applicant, who has a need to move to a particular locality in the district where significant hardship would be caused to them or others, if they did not move, may be awarded additional priority.

## *(c) Armed Forces with Urgent Housing Needs*

Additional priority may be given to members of the armed and reserved forces, widows/widowers of armed/reserve forces personnel killed whilst in service and who have an urgent housing need, for example those who need to move urgently because of a life-threatening illness or sudden disability.

## *(d) Emergency Management Transfers*

Existing RP tenants in need of an emergency management transfer will be awarded Additional priority and placed into Band 1 (See18.3)

16.2 Over Crowding

Households will be regarded as overcrowded when they are assessed as needing at least one more bedroom than their current accommodation provides.

For the purpose of defining overcrowding the following factors apply:

1. A single person aged 16 or over requires one bedroom.
2. A couple requires one bedroom.
3. Two children of a different sex, where one is aged 10 or over, require 2 bedrooms.
4. Children of same sex share a bedroom until 16 years of age.
5. One room will be classified as a living room; all other rooms (except bathrooms and kitchens) will be classified as bedrooms provided they are suitable as sleeping accommodation (exception of bedsits/studio flat).
6. Rooms measuring less than 4.6 square metres (50 square feet) will not be counted as a bedroom.

16.3 Direct Match

In certain circumstances, a property may be allocated directly to an applicant without other applicants being able to bid on that property; for example, where a property is required by Registered Provider landlord to decant a tenant to complete work on their existing property, or to deal with an emergency situation.

### 17. Determining Priorities of applicants under HHC

17.1 Applicants, who are eligible and qualify to be accepted on to the HHC Register, will have their housing need assessed and be placed into one of four bands:

* Band 1: Urgent Priority
* Band 2: High Priority
* Band 3: Medium Priority
* Band 4: Low Priority

Priority is awarded within each band by the date the application was placed in that band. This date is known as the priority date.

* 1. If an applicant is moved up a band, the application will be given a date when the increased priority is awarded. This becomes the new priority date.

* 1. Applicants who are assessed as not in housing need, but are of a household type which could be considered for housing which is normally difficult to let and they wish to be considered for difficult to let properties, will be placed in Band 4.

* 1. If an applicant has a serious housing problem that requires urgent consideration for rehousing, their application will be reviewed by the HHC Manager and relevant local authority Manager and awarded higher priority, if appropriate.
  2. Special rules apply when prioritising applicants for housing into village vacancies, with preference being given to applicants who can demonstrate a local connection to that village.
  3. In taking into account an applicant’s financial resources in determining priorities between households with a similar level of need, the Council may disregard a lump sum received by a member of the Armed Forces as compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service.

### 18. Band 1- Urgent Priority

18.1 Applicants who fall into this category will be households who need to move because of:

1. Emergency Cases – Usually on health or welfare grounds; or
2. Emergency Management Transfers

18.2 Emergency Cases

Very few cases are likely to be eligible for this category. It will apply to:

* Applicants assessed as having a life-threatening health condition that is directly linked to unsuitable housing conditions and where the applicant has been awarded an urgent medical or welfare assessment (See Appendix 4- Health and Welfare Assessment).
* Applicants requiring urgent hospital discharge where their current accommodation is totally unsuitable for their needs.
* Applicants required to move for witness protection reasons, MARAC, MAPPA and Child Protection issues.

18.3 Emergency Management Transfers

Where an existing tenant of Winchester City Council or a Registered Provider in the partnership needs to be moved immediately because of serious violence or harassment, where this has been substantiated and management action against the perpetrator cannot resolve the situation.

Other cases recognised as emergencies are at the discretion of the local authority.

Urgent priority banding will be time limited for 3 months. Applicants will be expected to bid for the next suitable vacancy. This can be extended where no suitable property has arisen during the time period. If a suitable property arises and the applicant is successful in bidding but refuses the offer of accommodation, then their priority will be reduced to their original Band.

Decisions regarding Emergency Management Transfers will be made by the respective Housing Managers in the Local Authority and Registered Provider concerned.

### 19. Band 2 – High Priority

19.1 Applicants who fall into this category will be households who need to move because of:

1. Statutory Homeless Duties
2. Overcrowding by Two Bedrooms
3. Serious Disrepair
4. High Medical or Welfare Grounds
5. Vulnerable applicants in Supported Housing ready for Move On
6. Existing Social Housing Tenants (Social / Affordable rent) Underoccupying their Current Accommodation
7. Management Transfers, including Decants.

19.2 Statutory Homeless Households

1. Applicants who have been accepted by one of the Councils with a full duty to house under the homelessness legislation and who are placed in accommodation that is not suitable for their long-term needs, or

1. Where the lease for their private sector leased property is ending through no fault of their own, or

1. Where the Council needs to release temporary accommodation in order to meet local homeless priorities and pressures.

1. Applicants accepted as statutorily homeless and have been accommodated in a short-stay flat/hostel under an Assured Shorthold Tenancy or licence and been moved up from Band 3 to Band 2 by the relevant local authority.

1. Households occupying Private Sector Leasing Scheme (PSL) properties after two years will be moved into Band 2.

Statutory Homeless Households will only be able to bid for properties in the Council area where the homelessness duty is owed.

19.3 Over-Crowding

A Band 2 priority is awarded to applicants living in overcrowded circumstances where they are lacking two or more bedrooms. Applicants will be eligible to bid for properties according to their assessed bedroom need.

19.4 Severe Disrepair

Where an applicant’s home is assessed as being in serious disrepair and is considered unsafe by the Council, but cannot be remedied by the applicant or landlord within a reasonable timescale and housing conditions can be resolved through re-housing.

Assessments will be carried out by Environmental Health Officers having regard to Category 1 hazards under the Housing Health Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

19.5 High Medical or Welfare Grounds

An applicant whose current housing conditions is detrimental to health and interferes with their quality of life to a high degree resulting in the award of a high medical or welfare assessment.

19.6 Existing Social Housing Tenants

Existing Social Housing tenants (Social / Affordable rent) living in East Hampshire, Eastleigh Havant, Test Valley or Winchester who:

* Will release a property required by the Councils to meet housing need (e.g. - tenants in properties previously adapted who no longer require the adaptations).

* Are under-occupying their property by one bedroom or more and who wish to move to smaller accommodation (excluding those living in sheltered or older persons housing).

* Are under-occupying their property by one bedroom or more (including starter tenancies) and are suffering or may suffer financial hardship because of reduced welfare payments due to under-occupation. Additional priority may be awarded to applicants in these circumstances.

* Are applicants who have succeeded to a tenancy and who are required to move to smaller accommodation.

* 1. Vulnerable Applicants in Supported Housing

Multi-agency Supported Housing Panels (SHP) are established in each local authority area to assist applicants with a housing related support need. The Panels will assess, prioritise, agree movement from and between different supported housing schemes and facilitate move-on into independent accommodation and floating support.

* 1. Management Transfers, including Decants

Where an existing tenant of Winchester City Council or RP provider in the partnership needs to be moved urgently, but does not need to move into the next suitable available property as their situation does not require immediate re-housing.

High priority banding will be time limited for 3 months. Applicants will be expected to bid for the next suitable vacancy. This can be extended where no suitable property has arisen during the time period. If a suitable property arises and the applicant is successful in bidding but refuses the offer of accommodation, then their priority will be reduced to original Band.

Applicants assessed as having a Band 2 priority can be moved to Band 1 if there are both urgent and exceptional circumstances.

### 20. Band 3 – Medium Priority

20.1 Applicants who fall into this category will be households who need to move because of:

1. Overcrowding by one bedroom
2. Temporary/insecure housing
3. Lacking/sharing facilities
4. Medium Medical or Welfare Grounds
5. Social housing tenants living in two bedroom flats that have two children
6. Existing social housing tenants (Accepted in accordance with the Right to Move Regulations / living in a Market Rent)
7. Social Housing Tenants living in a Bedsit/Studio Flat
8. Owed a Prevention or Relief duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
   1. Overcrowding by One Bedroom

Applicants living in overcrowded circumstances where they are lacking in one bedroom.

* 1. Temporary/insecure Housing

The following applicants are considered to be living in temporary or insecure housing if:

1. They have been accepted as statutorily homeless by one of the five Councils and have:
   * + Been accommodated in temporary housing or
     + Been accommodated in a short-stay flat, hostel, or refuge under an Assured Shorthold Tenancy or licence or
     + Accepted a qualifying offer of private rented accommodation, which brings the homelessness duty to an end or

(b) They are occupying Private Sector Leasing Scheme (PSL) properties secured by the Council for up to two years or

1. They have an Assured Shorthold Tenancy in the private rented sector and do not have the means to resolve their own housing situation or
2. Are considered to be of ‘no fixed abode’ or
3. They occupy Armed Forces accommodation and are close to the end of their service. Applicants with an ‘urgent housing need’ may be awarded additional priority.
   1. Fixed–term tenancies with a housing association will not be considered to be temporary/insecure housing.
   2. Lacking Essential Facilities

Where an applicant is lacking the following essential facilities:

* Cooking Facilities
* Bath or Shower
* Internal WC
* Cold/Hot Water Supplies
* Electricity/Gas Supply
* Adequate Heating

20.6 Sharing Facilities

Where an applicant is sharing the following essential facilities with another person who is not part of their application:

* Kitchen
* Bathroom/Shower
* Internal WC
* Living Room
  1. Medium Medical or Welfare Grounds

An applicant whose current housing conditions is detrimental to health and interferes with their quality of life to a medium degree resulting in the award of a medium medical or welfare assessment.

* 1. Social Housing Tenants living in Two Bedroom Flats

Social housing tenants in the East Hampshire, Eastleigh, Havant, Test Valley and Winchester council areas who are living in a two bedroom flat and who have two children will be considered for more appropriate family accommodation, e.g. a house or maisonette based on assessed housing need.

* 1. Existing social housing tenants accepted in accordance with the Right to Move Regulations / living in a Market Rent property

Social housing tenants who have reasonable preference because of a need to move to the local authorities’ district to avoid hardship; and need to move because the tenant works or has been offered work in the district of the authority and has a genuine intention to take up the offer (See appendix 3 – HHC Operational Procedures). Social housing tenants living in a Market Rented Property.

* 1. Social Housing Tenants living in a Bedsit/Studio Flat

Social housing tenants living in a bedsit/studio flat in the East Hampshire, Eastleigh, Havant, Test Valley and Winchester Council areas for a period of 2 years or over will be considered for one bedroom accommodation.

* 1. Owed a Prevention or Relief duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Applicants with a qualifying local connection owed either the prevention or relief Homelessness duty by East Hampshire, Eastleigh, Havant, Test Valley and Winchester council areas.

### 21. Band 4 – Low Priority

21.1 Applicants who fall into this category will be households who need to move because of:

1. Low Medical or Welfare Grounds
2. Living in tied or Armed Forces accommodation
3. Wish to be considered for difficult to let properties. This will normally be extra care or sheltered accommodation.
4. Applicants who are serving prison sentences and who on release will have a housing need or be homeless and have a local connection to one of the Councils.
   1. Low Medical or Welfare Grounds

An applicant whose current housing conditions is detrimental to health and interferes with their quality of life to a low degree resulting in the award of a low medical or welfare assessment.

* 1. Living in Tied or Armed Forces accommodation

Applicants living in Tied or Armed Forces accommodation.

* 1. Wish to be considered for difficult to let properties.

Are not in housing need, unless they are of a household type which could be considered for housing which is normally difficult to let and they wish to be considered for difficult to let. This will normally be extra care or sheltered accommodation.

* 1. Currently serving prison sentences

Applicants who are serving prison sentences and who on release will have a housing need or be homeless and have a local connection to one of the HHC local authorities. The applicants will be reassessed on release and placed in an appropriate band.

### 22. Section 2 – Processes; Applications and Assessment

22.1 Applications and Assessment

Anyone requiring assistance to complete an application for housing can contact the relevant Council who will be able to offer them advice and support in making an application for housing. (See 23.23 for details of relevant Council)

22.2 Registration and Priority Date

New applications will be registered from the date they apply to be registered on HHC. For online applications, this will be the date the online application is completed. For the purposes of a paper application form, this will be the date the application form is received by the relevant Council. This date is known as the registration date.

Under the Allocations Framework all applications for housing are assessed and placed in one of four bands depending on their housing need. Priority is awarded within each band by date the application was placed in the band. This date is known as the priority date.

However, for applicants whose application has been suspended for deliberately worsening their circumstances (13.2), their priority date will be the date their application is made live following suspension for 6 months.

For applicants whose application has been suspended for former debt/rent arrears and debt (13.6), their priority date will be the date they cleared their outstanding debt or the Council is satisfied the applicant has adhered to a payment plan for 6 months.

22.3 Household

When applicants join the list, and whenever an application is reviewed, an assessment will be made of the make-up of the applicant’s household. This assessment will normally be straightforward, but decisions may need to be made as to whether individuals included on an application form are accepted by the Council as being part of the household who, in the event of re-housing, will be accommodated with the applicant. The size and make-up of the household will determine the assessed bedroom need (See Appendix 3).

22.4 Individual Assessments

Once a completed form or online application has been received, the relevant Housing Service will then undertake an assessment of housing need against this Policy. Health and welfare needs are taken into account in the assessment. If additional information is required, a Health and Welfare Assessment form will be sent out to be completed.

Providing the applicant is eligible and qualifies for the Housing Register and the application has been completed fully, it will be registered onto the Hampshire Home Choice Housing Register. Through the assessment process, each applicants housing need will be considered and a level of priority awarded by placing the applicant in one of four bands.

A letter will be sent to the applicant within 10 working days of receipt of all relevant information, confirming their application reference number, the date the application was registered, their banding and their assessed bedroom need.

As a result of the partnership between the participating Councils, the five registers are effectively merged into the Hampshire Home Choice Register and operate under the Allocations Framework.

22.5 Missing Information and Incomplete Applications

If further verification is required, the applicant will be contacted in writing to provide the information necessary to assess their application. Any applicant who does not provide the requested information within 28 days will be assumed to no longer require housing and their application will be cancelled accordingly.

Paper application forms not completed fully will be returned to be completed. Online applications which are not completed within 28 days will be cancelled.

22.6 Applicants not Eligible and do not Qualify

If the applicant is considered to be ineligible or does not qualify for the Housing Register, they will be sent a letter confirming this and the reason for this decision.

22.7 Cancelling and Suspending Applications

If information is obtained that gives reason to believe that an applicant who has already been accepted onto the Housing Register is, in fact, ineligible or no longer qualifies to be on the Register, or their circumstances may have changed, their application may be suspended or cancelled. The applicant will be informed in writing and they will be given 28 days to provide the requested information. If they do not reply within this period, or if they reply but the Council still believes them to be ineligible or no longer qualify, they will be removed from the Housing Register (see Appendix 5).

22.8 Change in Circumstances

Applicants who move to a new address or whose circumstances change after they have been accepted onto the Housing Register (e.g. - who wish to add or remove someone to their application or a change in income or employment, etc.) should immediately contact the Council with which their application for housing is registered to notify them of the changes and arrange to complete any necessary forms.

Eligibility and qualification for the Register may be reconsidered when there is a change in circumstances.

22.9 Remaining on the Housing Register

Applicants will be required to renew their housing application on a yearly basis, on the anniversary of their relevant application date – known as the “renewal date”.

If applicants fail to voluntarily renew their application, they will be sent a written reminder to do so within 21 days of the renewal date. Any applicant who does not renew their application within 28 days of receiving their reminder letter to do so will be assumed to no longer require housing and their application will be cancelled accordingly.

If an applicant makes contact within 6 months of their original application being cancelled, this application will be reinstated.

If contact is not made within 6 months and satisfactory evidence is provided of an incapacity causing the failure to renew, the application can be reinstated from the date of the original application.

Eligibility and qualification for the list may be reconsidered when an application is being reviewed.

22.10 Confidentiality

Information regarding a person’s application for housing will not be disclosed to any third party or member of the public without the applicant’s express consent unless the Council is required to do so legally. By signing the housing application form, an applicant gives consent for the relevant Council to make enquiries with regard to their housing need and their potential ability to manage a future tenancy. The declaration also gives express consent to share such information with partner Registered Providers or other social housing providers as detailed in the Privacy Notice and Declaration.

22.11 False or Misleading Information

If an applicant knowingly or recklessly gives false information or knowingly withholds information which the Council has reasonably required of him/her, an offence is committed. In all such cases the relevant Council will consider a prosecution for the offence in which an applicant may be subject to a fine of up to £5,000 under the Housing Act 1996. If an applicant has accepted a tenancy on the basis of using false or withholding information, the landlord may apply to the court for possession of the property.

22.12 Right to Review

All decisions with regard to the Allocations Framework are subject to Review should the applicant be dissatisfied with a decision. This right to a Review includes decisions regarding eligibility, qualification and housing need assessments. A request for a Review should be made to the Council dealing with the application. An officer senior to the person making the original decision and who was not involved in making the original decision will carry out the Review.

A request for a Review must be made within 21 days of the decision providing the reasons for the Review. The Council has discretion to extend the time limit if it considers this would be reasonable. If further information is needed, the applicant will be invited to write or, if unable to do this, make oral representation. The applicant may also appoint someone on his or her behalf to do this. If the reviewing officer finds that the original decision did not take relevant information into account, they will refer the case back for re-consideration. The applicant will be notified of the Review decision within 56 days of the request for a Review.

### 23. Section 3 – Allocations and Lettings

23.1 Available Properties

100% of social lettings to which the Councils have nomination rights and Winchester City Councils vacancies will be made available through the scheme. Each Council may agree some specific exceptions.

23.2 Properties not included in the Scheme

Examples of lettings which may be excluded are as follows:

* Decants to allow repairs to be carried out
* Temporary accommodation for households who are homeless or may be threatened with homelessness
* Supported housing
* Extra-care housing
* Management cases for an existing social tenant.
  1. Cross Boundary Moves

Local authorities can agree on a voluntary basis to advertise a property as being available for a cross boundary move which would allow applicants across the five Council areas to be considered for the property as well as homes in the local authority in which the applicant has a local connection. These properties will be clearly labelled in the property adverts and it will be very clear for which properties the applicant can and cannot bid.

* 1. Right to Move Quota

The Secretary of State considers that local authority’s should set a quota for the proportion of properties that it expects to allocate each year to transferring tenants who need to move into their district for work related reasons (‘the Right to Move quota’), and considers that an appropriate quota would be at least 1%. HHC is already striking a balance between the interests of transferring tenants who need to move into their district for work related reasons and the demand from other applicants in identified housing need, and therefore will not adopt a quota at present.

* 1. Direct Match

In certain circumstances, the Council will allocate a property directly to an applicant which is known as a direct match. The advert will clearly state that the property has already been allocated to an applicant with a specific need. Examples of when a direct match may take place are:

* Applicant requires a specifically adapted property
* Urgent management decant required
* Applicant is subject to Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements or Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference and requires specific accommodation in a specific area
* Witness Protection.

23.6 Advertising Properties

Vacant Social Housing to which the Councils have nomination rights and Winchester City Councils vacancies will be advertised through the Choice Based Lettings scheme. Adverts will be available at locations throughout the East Hampshire, Eastleigh, Havant, Test Valley and Winchester region, including the Council offices in which free internet access is available. Details of available properties will also be placed on the Hampshire Home Choice website.

[www.hampshirehomechoice.org.uk](http://www.hampshirehomechoice.org.uk/)

The Councils and Registered Providers will arrange for each vacancy to be advertised and will specify the requirements for each property. Some properties may be labelled by the Councils to enable the development of sustainable communities. For new developments, this may include Local Lettings Policies. Depending on the Councils strategic needs, the labelling of properties may include certain restrictions, e.g. some social housing may only be offered to people who have an assessed support need or for transferring tenants.

The advertisement will usually include details such as the following:

* The Landlord
* The weekly rent, including all other service charges
* Whether property is a social or affordable rent
* Whether property is let on a fixed term tenancy
* Properties available for cross boundary moves
* The anticipated date the property will be ready for occupation
* The recommended number of permitted occupants
* Any age limits e.g. for households with children, for sheltered accommodation, for older/disabled persons or any landlord specific requirement
* Whether the property is restricted by a Planning Obligation under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 where offers of tenancies may only be made to applicants with a strong local connection to a rural exception site
* Village vacancies subject to local connection restrictions
* Accessible housing e.g. wheelchair adapted.
* Whether pets are allowed.
  1. Bidding

All eligible and qualifying applicants can make bids for properties advertised by telephone or online via the website. Full details of how to bid are set out in the Hampshire Home Choice User Guide. This can be found on the Hampshire Home Choice website or directly from one of the participating Councils.

Applicants can only bid for up to three properties for which they are eligible per bidding cycle. There is a weekly bidding cycle although this may change at times during the year subject to agreement from the five Councils.

* 1. Multiple Bidding

For new developments, the same property types will be covered by one advert. Applicants only need to place one bid to be considered for all the property type covered by the advert.

* 1. Assisted Bids

All applicants are expected to make bids themselves but in limited circumstances those who do not bid for properties may receive a direct bid. Since service user participation is a critical part of Choice Based Lettings, the Councils recognise that some vulnerable applicants may require assistance in making bids. To ensure that vulnerable households have fair access to the scheme, applicants with support needs and those who have language difficulties will be supported by the Council, or an appointed support provider which may include assisted bidding.

* 1. Assessment of Bids

Priority within the band is decided by the date the application was awarded that band.

Registered Providers taking part in the scheme will have access to the shortlist of applicants who have made a bid for the property. The applicant with the highest priority and who meets all of the advert and preference criteria and who is therefore at the top of the shortlist will be nominated to the Registered Provider or selected by Winchester City Councils Landlord Services.

Once a bid is accepted the letting of property will be organised by the Registered Provider or Winchester City Councils Landlord Services.

* 1. Skipping

Applicants who do not meet the advert and preference criteria will be skipped.

* 1. When more than one Applicant has Identical Preference

Where two or more eligible applicants apply for a property and are in the same band and have the same priority date the applicant with the earliest registration date will be given priority. If the registration date is the same, the Council will carry out a housing needs assessment of the applicant to determine who may have the highest housing need for the property. Regard may also be given to which household size and family make-up may make best use of the property.

If an applicant’s housing need, household size and family make-up are similar, then the length of residency connection with the district shall be considered with the household with the longest residency connection with the Council from where the property is being advertised getting priority.

This will also be applied in the event of a property being advertised as available for cross boundary moves.

* 1. Reasons why a Landlord may refuse an Applicant for a property If for any reason a Registered Provider or Winchester City Councils Landlord Services wishes to refuse an applicant, the Registered Provider or Winchester City Councils Landlord Services is required to notify the Councils Allocations Service. The Councils Allocations Service will renominate/select to the next suitable applicant on the shortlist.

If there are no eligible bids or the shortlist has been exhausted the property will be re-advertised. For grounds for refusal see Appendix 6.

* 1. Registered Provider or Winchester City Councils Landlord Services Review Process

If a Registered Provider or Winchester City Councils Landlord Services refuses an applicant for a property, they must inform the applicant of their reasons for refusal and of their Review Process.

* 1. Verification

The Council will verify all information provided by the applicant that is relevant to their eligibility and qualifying for an allocation of accommodation. Further verification, which may include inviting the applicant for an interview or completing a home visit, will be required at the time an applicant is allocated a property and the Council may check information with other sources as allowed by the law.

Applicants will be expected to provide documentary evidence that all persons included on the application are resident at the address applied from. Applicants will also be required to provide any additional proof considered appropriate to confirm the applicant’s circumstances.

Registered Providers or Winchester City Councils Landlord Services may carry out their own verification processes and these will be in addition to those carried out by the relevant Councils verification.

* 1. Offer of Tenancy

Once all verification processes are completed, the Registered Provider or Winchester City Councils Landlord Services makes an offer of the vacancy to the successful applicant.

* 1. Difficult Lets

If there are no eligible bids for a property, it will be re-advertised by HHC. In some cases the eligibility criteria may be relaxed.

* 1. Refusals

An applicant, who successfully bids, is nominated and is offered suitable accommodation by a Registered Provider or selected by Winchester City Councils Landlord Services but subsequently refuses an offer on two occasions within a six month period will not be able to bid for further properties for six months from the date of the refusal of the second property.

* 1. Feedback

All successful lettings will be reported on the Hampshire Home Choice website. The reports show the number of bids for each property, the band and the priority date of the successful applicant.

* 1. Fair Allocations

The Councils are committed to providing equality of opportunity to all applicants who apply for housing. The monitoring of allocations under the scheme will take place to ensure that everyone is treated fairly. All applicants applying for social housing across the five authorities will be assessed by way of an assessment of housing need.

* 1. Equality

The Councils are subject to the general public sector equality duty in the Equality Act 2010. The Councils and its partner Registered Providers are committed to providing equality of opportunity to all individuals who apply for re-housing. Monitoring of applications and lettings may take place to ensure that everyone is being treated fairly.

* 1. Changes to the Scheme

The Allocations Framework will be reviewed annually by the five Councils and updated where necessary. This will help to ensure that the policy meets legislative and best practice requirements.

* 1. Monitoring

The Councils hold a quarterly HHC Board meeting which is attended by representatives and members from each of the Councils and representatives from the Registered Providers.

* 1. Complaints

If an applicant is dissatisfied with any aspect of their application, other than where a review can be made, they should follow the Councils published complaints procedure, available on the Councils website or on request.

[www.easthants.gov.uk](http://www.easthants.gov.uk/) [www.eastleigh.gov.uk](http://www.eastleigh.gov.uk/)  [www.havant.gov.uk](http://www.havant.gov.uk/) [www.testvalley.gov.uk](http://www.testvalley.gov.uk/)

[www.winchester.gov.uk](http://www.winchester.gov.uk/)

* 1. Access to Personal Information

In accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations, individuals have a right to access their personal data (commonly referred to as subject access) and have the right to; obtain confirmation their personal data is being processed and a copy of their personal data (In some cases a reasonable fee may be charged). As far as possible, the Council will make this available, subject to certain exemptions. Individuals wishing to access their records should contact the relevant Council:

East Hampshire District Council, Housing Service Penns Place, Petersfield, Hampshire GU31 4EX. 01730 234345 / 234377 / 234378 / 234394 housingservices@easthants.gov.uk

Eastleigh Borough Council, Housing Service

Eastleigh House, Upper Market Street, Eastleigh, Hampshire SO50 9YN.

02380 688165 direct@eastleigh.gov.uk

Havant Borough Council, Housing Service

Public Service Plaza, Civic Centre Road, Havant, Hampshire PO9 2AX.

023 9244 6379

housingservice@havant.gov.uk

Test Valley Borough Council, Housing Service

Beech Hurst, Weyhill Road, Andover, Hampshire SP10 3AJ.

01264 368613 / 368609

Former Magistrates Court, Church Street, Romsey, Hampshire SO51 8AQ

01794 527773 lettings@testvalley.gov.uk

Winchester City Council, Housing Service

City Offices, Colebrook Street, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 9LJ.

01962 848400

housingallocations@winchester.gov.uk

23.26 The Local Government / Housing Ombudsman

If an applicant is not satisfied with the action taken by the Council and has exhausted the complaints procedure available, they can send a written complaint to the Ombudsman. The Local Government Ombudsman can be contacted at:

Local Government Ombudsman, PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH.

Phone:0300 061 0614

Fax: 024 7682 0001

Website: [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk/)

If an applicant is not satisfied with the action taken by the Council or a Registered Provider and has exhausted the complaints procedure available they can send a written complaint to the Ombudsman. The Housing Ombudsman Service can be contacted at:

Housing Ombudsman Service

81 Aldwych, London WC2B 4HN

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Fax: 020 7831 1942

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Website: [www.ihos.org.uk](http://www.ihos.org.uk/)

**24 APPENDICES**

1. Sensitive Lettings
2. Owner Occupiers
3. Definition of a Household
4. Health and Welfare Assessment
5. Cancelling and Suspending Applications
6. Reasons why a Registered Provider or Winchester City Councils Landlord Services may refuse an applicant for a property

# Appendix 1 – Sensitive Lettings

Purpose

The purpose of the Sensitive Lettings Policy is to create sustainable and cohesive communities in relation to individual lettings where there may be need to redress the balance of the community.

Objectives

In these cases the Registered Provider or Winchester City Councils Landlord Services is departing from the routine allocation process. Instead of allocating a property to the applicant at the top of the shortlist with the most housing need the landlord considers the suitability of the applicant for the vacancy, on the basis of the information they have about the applicant and the knowledge they have about the property, its location or the neighbours.

In allocating housing the Registered Provider and Winchester City Councils Landlord Services needs to balance a range of factors:

* the individual's housing need;
* the suitability of the property for that applicant;
* to create a community that is sustainable;
* to ensure current and future tenants feel safe;
* to protect the public and residents from nuisance and anti-social behaviour;

Preference will be given to applicants who are able to demonstrate that they will be able to manage a tenancy successfully and using the following cascading mechanism:

1. Applicant or partner is resident within the local authority area and employed in paid work.
2. Applicant or partner is employed in paid work and has a local connection to the local authority area.
3. Are registered on Hampshire Home Choice.

Exclusions

Applicants will not be considered for a property advertised as a sensitive let where there is evidence of known history or convictions for the following:

* criminal behaviour
* anti-social behaviour
* drug abuse
* drug dealing
* breaches of any tenancy with any landlord
* rent arrears.

The landlord may request additional information from other partner agencies such as the Police, Probation Service, Primary Care Trust, Drug and Alcohol Services and former Landlord in determining suitability for a property subject to the Sensitive Lettings Policy.

Process

If a landlord wants to advertise a property as a sensitive let, they will need to provide evidence to the Council and on the reasons why the property is required to be let on a sensitive let basis. The Councils Allocations Service will have to agree to any property being advertised as a sensitive let.

The property advert will clearly state the property is subject to a Sensitive Lettings Policy.

Once the shortlist has closed, the Council will nominate/select in accordance to the preference criteria within the Sensitive Lettings Policy. If for any reason a Registered Provider or Winchester City Councils Landlord Services wishes to refuse an applicant the Council will nominate/select the next suitable person on the shortlist.

Right for Review

An applicant has the right on request to be informed of any decision about the facts of their case which has been taken into account in deciding whether to make an allocation of a sensitive let to them.

Equality Impact Statement

This Sensitive Lettings Policy does not discriminate directly or indirectly and has given regard to the Equality Act 2010 to ensure no one is treated unfairly and has equal opportunities to access to housing.

The Councils are using their powers under the Localism Act 2011 to enable applicants who are working to access housing, by framing their allocations scheme so as to enable specific properties to be allocated to those in employment through the use of Local Lettings Policies.

Monitoring

The effectiveness of properties being advertised as sensitive lets will be monitored on a regular basis. A property should only be advertised as a sensitive let if this is absolutely necessary to address the situation and any housing management issues.

# Appendix 2 – Owner Occupiers

An owner occupier who applies to join the HHC Register would not qualify unless there are exceptional circumstances or they wish to be considered for a difficult to let property designated for those aged over 55 years.

In considering those exceptional cases the Council will need to be satisfied that the applicant is in housing need and is unable to resolve their own housing circumstances. Applications will be assessed case by case, taking all relevant information into account.

In assessing whether an applicant is in housing need the following will be considered:

1. the suitability of their present accommodation – whether current accommodation is adequate for their situation taking into account state of repair, health, employment, family support and whether an applicant’s situation is likely to deteriorate.

1. the applicant’s financial circumstances – whether their income, savings or the equity within any property they own is sufficient to secure alternative suitable accommodation. The Council may take into account the current house prices locally in making its decision.

In some case the Council may consider it reasonable for the applicant to be able to secure accommodation in the private sector. However, due to a shorthold tenancy being only available initially for a limited term, this may not be appropriate in some cases.

1. An applicant must be aged 55 years or over with a housing support need and would benefit from sheltered housing.

Sheltered housing is usually designated for those aged over 55 years. In some cases the scheme may only be available for those aged over 60 or 65 years of age. In some cases the scheme landlord may carry out a needs assessment to assess if an applicant is eligible for their scheme.

If an applicant is assessed as qualifying for an allocation this does not guarantee they will be allocated a property. An applicant will have to also meet the criteria set by the scheme landlord especially in cases where the landlord may have charitable status.

Where an applicant who is an owner occupier has been assessed as a qualifying person as a result of having a housing need and a need for sheltered housing, they will only qualify for an offer of sheltered housing and will not qualify for an offer of a general needs property.

# Appendix 3 – Definition of a Household

Any person wishing to be included as part of an applicant’s household must satisfy the Council that they are a permanent member of the applicant’s household and show that it is reasonable to expect them to reside with the applicant on a continuing basis.

In the case of a separated household or where residence of children is shared between parents, it would not normally be considered reasonable for a child who has a suitable home with one parent to be taken into account when considering the housing needs of the other parent.

In all such cases, an assessment will be carried out to decide who should be considered to be part of the household and the following factors will be taken into consideration along with any other relevant facts:

* Access of people included on the application to other suitable accommodation
* Previous living arrangements
* Actual living arrangements
* Preferred living arrangements
* Evidence of longstanding residence and commitment to being part of the household
* Likely longer-term living arrangements
* Special circumstances
* Information from Children’s or Adult Services.

# Applicants requiring a Carer

Where the applicant states that they require a carer to live with them who would not normally be considered to be part of the household, then the Council will decide whether the carer is part of the household or could reasonably be expected to be part of the household. In most cases, care can be provided without the provision of a separate bedroom for a carer.

Each case will be dealt with on its own merits, and the following factors will be taken into consideration along with any other relevant facts:

* Whether there is an established need for live-in 24 hour care
* Availability of supported or extra-care housing which may meet the applicant’s needs
* Current living and care arrangements
* Likely future living and care arrangements
* Special circumstances • Information from Adult Services.

Other cases may arise where there are queries about households (e.g. where adult sons or daughters return home or where distant relatives or 3 generation families or friends are included on the housing application).

# Appendix 4 – Health and Welfare Assessment

This policy, along with the current Allocations Framework and scheme of Allocations, explains how and when a Health or Welfare award can be given to applicants and what evidence is needed in order to support additional priority under Health or Welfare grounds.

The health and welfare of an applicant or a member of their household will be assessed on the basis of the effect of their current property on their condition, and how a different property would improve the applicant’s health or welfare. A health or welfare issue in this context means a physical or mental illness, disability or incapacity, including behavioural syndromes, problems of physical or mental development and disorders related to drugs and / or alcohol. The assessment is based on a holistic approach, which takes account of psychological and social factors alongside physical issues.

**To qualify for an award the condition must be made worse by your present housing and your health or welfare must also be likely to be improved by moving to alternative accommodation**.

Please note that a health or welfare award does not necessarily mean that your application will move into a higher Band.

The following table shows which awards are available and which Band an application will be placed into if the award is made:

# Health and Welfare Table

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Priority level** | **Definition** | **Priority**  **Band** |
| **Urgent** | There is a critical need to move. The current housing situation is seriously detrimental to health or welfare and interferes with quality of life to an intolerable degree. | **Band 1** |
| **High** | There is a high medical or welfare need to move. The current housing situation is detrimental to health and interferes with the quality of life to a high degree. | **Band 2** |
| **Medium** | There is a moderate medical or welfare need to move. The current housing situation is detrimental to health and interferes with the quality of life to a moderate degree. | **Band 3** |
| **Low** | There is a slight medical or welfare need to move. The current housing situation is detrimental to health and interferes with the quality of life to a low degree. | **Band 4** |
| **None** | There is no medical or welfare need to move or a move would offer no improvement. The current housing situation is not detrimental to health and does not interfere with the quality of life. | **No**  **Priority** |

# Health and Welfare Assessment Form

You only need to tell us about problems if you think that your health or welfare is being made worse by your housing and that it would improve if you moved.

You can discuss your situation with the Council dealing with your application. Housing options may be offered to assist you in resolving any issues you may be experiencing in the first instance. In some instances a Housing Officer may make a recommendation for additional priority under health and/or welfare grounds.

If your condition is made worse by your present housing and your health or welfare is also likely to be improved by moving to alternative accommodation you will be sent a Health and Welfare Assessment form.

Only one award can be given to a household. Where more than one household member has a health condition an assessment will be made taking into account everyone’s health or welfare needs and the highest award applicable will be made.

# Health and Welfare Assessment Process

The Health and Welfare Assessment Panel is made up of two members of the Housing Service who will assess an applicant’s Health or Welfare assessment form against the criteria shown within the Health and Welfare table based on all of the information you have provided about yourself and your household and according to the guidelines in the table.

If further information is necessary before a decision can be made, the Housing Service will write to you, your general practitioner or any other agency regarding additional information relating to the Health and Welfare application. They may also contact an independent medical advisor regarding your case if this is necessary.

For applicants who are awarded a higher band, their priority date will be the date the higher award was decided.

The Health and Welfare Assessment Panel will usually meet on a 2 weekly basis, although Winchester City Councils Panel is held on a weekly basis.

# Additional Bedrooms

Applicants can apply for an additional bedroom due to their medical needs. Evidence for an additional bedroom will be requested to support any requests for an additional bedroom. Usually the only circumstances in which an additional bedroom will be awarded is where an applicant requires a full-time live-in carer who is not part of the normal household.

# Adapted properties

Applicants who need a home suitable for wheelchair users may need to provide a report from an Occupational Therapist before an offer can be considered.

When allocating properties suitable for wheelchair users, or with any other adaptations for disabilities, or when allocating ground floor accommodation, priority may be given to applicants who have an assessed housing need for these properties and evidence of this has been received.

# What to do if you disagree with our decision

All decisions with regard to the Allocations Framework are subject to Review should the applicant be dissatisfied with a decision. A request for a Review should be made to the Council dealing with the application. An officer senior to the person making the original decision and who was not involved in making the decision will carry out the Review.

Details of the Right to Request a Review is detailed in 22.12.

It is important to remember that it is for the Council to make decisions in the administration of housing applications. Only the Council will be able to determine priority in line with the Allocations Framework.

Councils may where necessary take into account medical professional’s information about medical conditions and any need for alternative housing as a result of that condition and any impact of the current housing on such a condition but the Council will make the final decision.

# Appendix 5 – Cancelling and Suspending Applications

**1. Reasons for Suspending an Application:**

* Adequately housed
* Applicants request
* Rent arrears – temporary accommodation
* Awaiting documentation
* Evicted for rent arrears / nuisance
* Intentionally homeless
* No recent contact
* No response to offer
* Offer refused
* Person from abroad
* Rent arrears / Debt owing to a local authority or Registered Provider
* Unacceptable behaviour
* Under investigation
* Under offer

**2. Reasons for Cancelling an Application:**

* Applicant became ineligible
* Applicant gone away / no contact
* Cancelled at applicants request
* Data error
* Deceased
* Failure to respond within the time limit
* Housed by Local Authority
* Housed through shared ownership
* Housing by social landlord or other
* Housing Register review
* Housing review not returned
* Made own arrangements
* Mail returned as no longer at that address
* Moved away
* No longer wishes to be on list
* No response to contact letter
* No response to correspondence
* Non-qualifying person
* Unsuitable to be a tenant

# Appendix 6 - Reasons why a Landlord may refuse an Applicant for a property

A Registered Provider or Winchester City Councils Landlord Services may refuse an applicant for a property for the following reasons:

* Anti-social behaviour
* Area unsuitable
* Change of circumstances
* Does not meet age criteria
* Does not meet financial criteria
* Does not require ground floor
* Does not meet criteria
* Does not meet local lettings policy
* Efficient management of stock
* Fails to meet accommodation criteria
* Financially secure
* Geographic exclusion
* Health reasons
* Incomplete agency information
* Incomplete application
* Incomplete verification by applicant
* Management decision
* Needs supported housing
* No support package in place
* No vacant possession guarantee
* Non-compliance with tenancy conditions
* Non engagement with services
* Not ground floor
* Offered to another shortlist
* Owner occupier
* Previously bypassed
* Previously refused
* Previously refused by Registered Provider
* Property unsuitable
* Rent arrears
* Rent Deposit Loan scheme and/or deposit scheme debt to the Councils
* Requires ground floor
* Sensitive let
* Suspected fraudulent application
* Unable to proceed
* Other reason – which may not fall within any of the above

**Emergency Accommodation & Temporary Accommodation Placements Outside of East Hampshire District Council**

1. **Background**
   1. The Council has a statutory duty to assist households presenting as homeless where they are considered to be eligible for assistance and in priority need. In the first instance the duty is to endeavour to prevent homelessness where ever possible which may take the form of mediation with family or the accommodation provider, intervention with landlords or lenders, or pursuing alternative housing options.
   2. One of the most effective homelessness prevention options is the Rent Deposit Scheme designed to assist a household into a private rented property in any area of their choice, which could extend to properties outside of East Hampshire. However over the past couple of years the local private rented housing market has become more expensive and this coupled with restrictions being imposed on the level of housing benefit awards/Housing Element of Universal Credit and the introduction of the benefit cap, has meant that the ability of households to afford rent levels has become more difficult.
   3. If it is not possible to prevent homelessness then the Council has a duty to provide temporary accommodation.
   4. The Council must also continue to provide accommodation to households that have been accepted as homeless while longer term accommodation is found and a ‘settled housing solution’ has been reached or until the duty towards the household has been discharged in one of the ways contained in the Housing Act 1996 (HA96).
2. **Policy Aims**
   1. In a recent Supreme Court case, Nzolameso v Westminster City Council [2015] UKSC22), it was stated that where a local authority is unable to accommodate homeless households in its own local authority area then it should have a policy to underpin its temporary accommodation placement process.
   2. This document sets out East Hampshire District Council’s procedure for placement of households in temporary accommodation both in and outside of the District. It covers both interim placements made under Section 188 Housing Act (HA96), while homeless enquiries are undertaken, and longer term temporary accommodation placements for households accepted as homeless under Section 193 HA96.
   3. The policy takes into account the statutory requirements on local authorities in respect of suitability of accommodation, including Suitability Orders, and the Homeless Code of Guidance 2006.
   4. As per section 208 HA96, and paragraph 16.7 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance, so far as reasonably practicable, the Council seeks to accommodate homeless households within the District and always considers the suitability of the accommodation, taking into account the circumstances of the individual household. However, due to an acute and increasing shortage of temporary accommodation, it is possible that a number of households may potentially be placed initially in emergency accommodation outside of the District.
   5. When determining whether it is reasonably practicable to secure temporary accommodation within the District, as opposed to simply what is reasonable, the cost of accommodation is also a relevant and proper consideration, due to budget constraints faced by the Council.
   6. The Council currently has temporary accommodation available within the District via:

* arrangements with one Bed and Breakfast establishment to provide emergency accommodation
* 5 rooms available in a shared house with support referred by the Council
* 56 studio flats let through a registered provider referred by the Council
* 26 x one bed units of accommodation let through registered providers referred by the Council
* 68 x two bed units of accommodation let through registered providers referred by the Council
* 49 x 3 bed units of accommodation let through registered providers referred by the Council

1. **Temporary Accommodation Offers and Refusals**
   1. Due to the shortage of suitable accommodation within the District, homeless applicants who are housed under the Council’s interim duty to accommodate pursuant to Section 188 HA96 may initially be placed in emergency accommodation, including Bed and Breakfast, while enquires are carried out to establish what duties are owed under the Act.
   2. Wherever possible, and in most cases, this accommodation will be made available within the District but on rare occasions it may be secured outside of the District. If this happens the Council will endeavour to move the household to accommodation within East Hampshire as soon as it becomes available.
   3. Applicants will be given one offer of suitable interim or longer term temporary accommodation.
   4. Where applicants refuse suitable temporary accommodation (which may include placements outside of the District) and the Council does not accept their reasons for refusal, and considers that the offer is suitable, applicants will not be offered further accommodation and will be required to make their own accommodation arrangements.
   5. Whilst there is no right of appeal against the suitability of accommodation offered to applicants under Section 188 HA96 (although they can apply for judicial review through the courts) there are suitability levels which interim accommodation cannot fall below.
   6. For applicants where the Council has accepted a rehousing duty under Section 193 HA96, (s193 duty) there is a right to request a review of the suitability decision, pursuant to Section 202 HA96.
   7. Where applicants, for whom the Council has accepted duty under s193, refuse a suitable offer and submit a review request, they will only continue to be accommodated during the review period in exceptional circumstances. Each case will be considered on an individual basis, taking into account the overall merits of the review request, any new information or evidence that may affect the original decision, and the personal circumstances of the applicant and the potential impact of the loss of accommodation.
   8. Should an applicant refuse an offer of accommodation and fail to take up occupation of the property and if following a review being considered the offer of accommodation is deemed suitable, the Council will consider that it has ceased its duty to the applicant having met its statutory obligations.
   9. Applicants requesting a review of the suitability of an offer of accommodation under s193 will be advised of their right to accept the offer of accommodation and pursue a review of the suitability of the accommodation whilst in occupation.
   10. If the outcome of a review of the suitability of the offer of accommodation considers that the offer is not suitable, the Council will be under a duty to make an alternative offer of more suitable accommodation as and when it becomes available.
   11. Where a statutory right of review exists if the review upholds the decision that the accommodation is suitable the applicant has the right to appeal to the County Court but only on a point of law.
   12. A property must remain suitable to the applicant and or their household until the Council has discharged it duty by providing permanent accommodation or discharging its duty by providing a private sector offer.
   13. The Council is also legally obliged to ensure that households with children or where a member of the household is pregnant do not remain in accommodation that is not self-contained (such as Bed & Breakfast) for a period longer than 6 weeks.
2. **Suitability of accommodation – factors to consider**
   1. In offering temporary accommodation, the Council will consider the suitability of the offer, taking into account the following factors:
      1. The temporary accommodation available in the district - Applicants will primarily be housed within the District if suitable accommodation is available, allowing them to maintain any established links with services and social/support networks etc. However, when there is a lack of suitable accommodation within the District, alternative placements will be used to meet the Council’s housing duty.
      2. Size and location of the property and the availability of support networks in the area - Accommodation must provide adequate space and room standards for the household and be fit to inhabit. The quality of the decoration/furniture, the layout/type of accommodation, provision of parking and lack of access to a garden are unlikely to be acceptable reasons for a refusal.

Support networks, either through family or professional support, may be considered as a factor if they are essential to the health and wellbeing of the household and to be without them would have a detrimental effect.

* + 1. Health factors - The Council will consider health factors, such as ability to get up the stairs, care and support provided by other statutory agencies or the need to access any specialist medical services that are only available within the District. If the applicant or a member of the household is citing medical grounds that were not identified during the initial assessment, the applicant must submit supporting medical information as soon as reasonably possible for this to be considered.

The key test in determining the impact of medical issues is whether the condition itself makes the housing offered unsuitable. Problems such as depression, asthma, diabetes or back pain would not normally make a property unsuitable, if the problems would persist in any sort of accommodation and would not be affected by or made worse by the accommodation being offered.

* + 1. Education - Attendance at local schools will not be considered a reason to refuse accommodation, though some priority will be given to special educational needs and students who are close to taking public examinations in determining priority for within District placements.
    2. Employment - The Council will consider the need of applicants who are in paid employment to reach their normal workplace from the accommodation that is secured whether that the person would be at risk of not being able to continue with the employment. In doing so it will be guided by the Department of Work and Pensions travel to work expectations.
    3. Proximity to Support Services - The council will consider the proximity to public transport, primary care services, and local services in the area in which the accommodation is located if they are essential to the health and wellbeing of the household and to be without them would have a detrimental effect.
    4. Any other special circumstance - The Council will consider any other reasons for refusal put forward by the applicant and come to an overall view about whether the offer is suitable.

1. **Duty to inform other local authority**
   1. Under s208 HA96 the council is under a duty to inform a local authority that is has placed a homeless household in temporary accommodation in their area. The information provided is as follows:
   * Name of the applicant
   * Number and description of other persons who normally reside with the applicant
   * The address of the accommodation
   * The date the accommodation was made available
   * The function that is being discharged in securing the accommodation
   1. East Hampshire District Council will notify the authority into which homeless households are placed and will seek to ensure that services are made available to the household and maintained where required

**East Hampshire District Council**

**Policy on the Discharge of Duty into Private Rented Sector Accommodation**

**Version 1**

**Dated: November 2019**

**Contents**

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**Section 2 Discharge of Homelessness Duty**

**Section 3 Hampshire Home Choice Offers**

**Section 4 Private Sector Offers**

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**Section 6 Offers, Refusals, acceptances and reviews of suitability**

**Section 7 Reapplication following loss of accommodation (private sector offers)**

1. **Background**
   1. The Localism Action 2011 amended the Housing Act 1996 (HA96) and produced new statutory regulations. The new regulations change the way in which local authorities can discharge their homeless duties to households accepted as statutorily homeless under Section 193 of the HA96.
   2. The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017 also placed further duties on local authorities which can be discharged when a household is under threat of homelessness.
   3. Local authorities have a duty to secure suitable alternative accommodation for households owed a duty under Section 193. This is usually taken to be social housing. However, the Localism Act allows suitable ‘Private Sector Offers’ to be used to end the main homeless duty and the HRA further allows for duties to be discharged into the private rented sector under a prevention or relief duty.
   4. This policy sets out how East Hampshire District Council will apply the legislation in respect of discharging its homelessness duties. The prevailing housing demand and supply pressures in the area have been taken into consideration in producing the policy.
   5. This policy will apply to all applicants who East Hampshire District Council accepts a homelessness duty towards. The policy will apply irrespective of whether the applicant has been placed into temporary accommodation, is likely to be placed into temporary accommodation or is able to secure their own temporary accommodation.
2. **Discharge of Homelessness Duty**
   1. The Council will discharge its duties to those accepted as homeless in the following ways:

* An offer of accommodation the applicant has successfully bid for through the Hampshire Home Choice scheme.
* An offer of accommodation, where a bid has been placed on their behalf by Council staff on the Hampshire Home Choice scheme, and this bid has been successful.
* An offer of a private rented tenancy.
* An offer of supported accommodation, where this is available and is considered to be the most appropriate type of accommodation for the applicant.
  1. The Council will also discharge its duties if the following circumstances occur:
* An applicant refuses a suitable offer of temporary accommodation made under Part 7 of the HA96.
* An applicant voluntarily ceases to occupy their temporary accommodation.
* The household is no longer eligible for homeless assistance.
* An applicant refuses a suitable offer of accommodation made under Part 6 of the HA96.
* An applicant becomes intentionally homeless from their temporary accommodation.

1. **Hampshire Home Choice Offer**
   1. All households accepted as homeless (excluding those who don’t meet the Qualifying Person criteria) will be registered on the Hampshire Home Choice (HHC) choice based lettings scheme housing register and be able to bid for properties advertised through the scheme in line with the Allocation Framework.
   2. The Choice Based Lettings Code of Guidance states that allocation policies must allow choice for applicants that have been deemed to be statutory homeless. However, in order to manage the demand for temporary accommodation, providing choice for applicants owed the main homelessness duty for an unrestricted period could mean that such applicants wait an unreasonably long time before they are offered suitable HA96 Part 6 accommodation.
   3. Homeless applicants who have been accepted will therefore be notified that they have a period of 6 months to freely bid for available properties. If after this period they have no justifiable reason for not bidding on properties that may have come available and that would have been suitable for their needs, bids can be placed on their behalf on advertised properties considered to be suitable for the applicant and their family’s needs.
   4. The homelessness duty will cease once a suitable offer of accommodation has been made, irrespective of whether the applicant accepts or refuses the offer, provided they have been informed in writing of:

* The possible consequence of refusal or acceptance of the offer
* Their right to request a review of the suitability of the accommodation
  1. Applicants assessed as not meeting the Qualifying Person criteria in accordance with the Allocation Framework will be excluded from the housing register and unable to bid on properties advertised through HHC. Applicants will be advised of the reasons why they do not qualify so that they may take any actions they can in order for the Council to reconsider this decision. This may include for example seeking paid employment within the district in order to reduce the time they would have to wait to qualify.
  2. Housing Officers will work with such applicants to help to find them suitable accommodation in the private rented sector or in supported accommodation to either resolve their housing situation or until they qualify to join HHC.

1. **Private Sector Offers**
   1. The Localism Act 2011 gives local authorities the power to discharge their duty to secure accommodation for homeless applicants by way of arrangements made with a Private Rented Sector (PRS) landlord.
   2. The introduction of this power ends the provisions to make available a “Qualifying Offer” of private sector accommodation that required the agreement of the applicant. From 9th November 2012, local authorities can discharge their homeless duty through an offer of a PRS without the agreement of the applicant.
   3. As with an offer of social housing, the homelessness duty will cease irrespective of whether the applicant accepts or refuses the offer, provided they have been informed in writing of:

* The reason they have been offered the accommodation.
* The possible consequence of refusal or acceptance of the offer.
* Their right to request a review of the suitability of the accommodation, and
* The effect of a further application to a local housing authority within two years of acceptance of the offer.
  1. East Hampshire District Council recognises that the number of PRS properties within the area that are available for the Council to discharge the homelessness duty to is unlikely to be of such quantity to meet the demand from all eligible applications. Therefore, the decision to offer PRS accommodation will be made if a suitable property is available that meets the needs of the household.
  2. The suitability of PRS accommodation is considered in two parts:
     + The structure and management of the property, which covers the physical condition, safety aspects and how the landlord or agent manages properties and their suitability to do so.
     + Suitability of the property for the tenant, which takes into consideration the individual needs of that applicant and their household considering such factors as location, affordability and accessibility.

4.6 Further information relating the structure and management of the property and the suitability of the property for the tenant is contained in Appendix 1 and 2

**5. Short Listing of PRS Vacancies**

5.1 Bids placed on behalf of applicants to advertised properties through the HHC scheme will be prioritised through the Allocations Framework. In the case of offers of PRS properties, the Council may determine that a suitable property best meets the needs of more than one applicant, in such circumstances the accommodation currently occupied will also be considered to determine which applicant is prioritised for a PRS offer.

5.2 Accommodation currently occupied is ranked as below, where 1 is the highest priority. In addition to this, consideration will also be given as to the length of time an applicant has been housed in temporary accommodation and the specific needs of a household if the accommodation offers specific features such as being on the ground floor, having a wet room or is otherwise disabled adapted.

1 In Bed and Breakfast accommodation

2 Awaiting temporary accommodation

3 In hostel accommodation

4 Accommodated under own arrangements

5 In self-contained temporary accommodation

**6.** **Offers, Acceptances, Refusals and Reviews of Suitability**

6.1 Where the applicant has been offered accommodation via the HHC or a PRS offer, if the applicant is considering refusing the property and, after discussion with their Housing Officer, the property is still considered to be suitable, a formal offer letter will be sent.

6.2 Notification of any offer (including an offer of a PRS property) will be made to the applicant by the Council in writing. The notification will clearly state the address, size, type and rent of the property. The applicant will be notified of the likely consequences of refusing the property and their right to request a review of the suitability of the accommodation.

6.3 Applicants will be strongly advised to accept the offer whilst a review is carried out, so that they still have accommodation available to them in the event that the Council’s original decision is upheld. Should the offer of accommodation subsequently be considered to be unsuitable a further offer of accommodation will be made as soon as possible.

6.4 Where the applicant refuses a suitable offer of accommodation the Council will cease its duty to the applicant under HA96 and HRA. Therefore, if they are currently occupying temporary accommodation this will be terminated. The applicant will be notified of this outcome accordingly and when they will be expected to vacate the temporary accommodation and given advice and assistance as to how they may secure their own accommodation.

6.5 Any request for a review of suitability must be made in writing to the Housing Manager - Options and Advice (or the equivalent officer) within 21 days of the date of the notice.

**7. Re-application following Loss of Accommodation (PRS offers)**

7.1 Under section 195A HA96, should the applicant approach the authority as homeless within a period of two years following acceptance of the private rented sector offer under section193 (7AA) HA96, irrespective as to whether the approach is from the offered property or elsewhere, the Council will:

* having confirmed the validity of the notice, will treat the applicant as being homeless from the date of expiry of their notice to vacate. The landlord/accommodation provider will therefore not be required to apply to court to regain possession.
* not reinvestigate the priority need of the household as the priority need of the applicant will be retained from the date of the acceptance of a duty under 193 (2) irrespective of any change in circumstances or household composition that may affect this.
* satisfy itself that the applicant is still eligible for assistance and did not become homeless intentionally from their last settled accommodation.

7.2 Where the applicant applies under this section and the Council accept a re-application duty, then the applicant shall be further reconsidered under this, or any successor policy, for discharge into the private or social rented sector.

**APPENDIX 1 PRS Offers – Structure and Management**

In order to consider a property suitable to discharge its duty, the Council will require that: -

* The tenancy is an Assured Shorthold Tenancy, for a period of at least 12 months.
* The property is in a reasonable physical condition
* All portable appliances provided by the Landlord, within the property, have been Portable Appliance Tested (PAT) within the last 12 months.
* There is a valid Gas Safety Certificate in place and any items that have been failed have been suitably isolated and their in-operation will not create hazards within the property, such as risk of extreme cold or lack of suitable cooking facilities.
* Where appropriate, carbon monoxide protection has been provided.
* All adequate Fire Safety precautions have been taken, including fire alarms, fire protection measures where required, and compliance with fire regulations in respect of all furniture and furnishings.
* An Energy Performance Certificate is provided.
* The landlord or agent has provided a statement confirming that they have the right to market the property for rental and that there is no restrictive covenant or other supervening legality preventing the letting of the property.
* The landlord or agent is a fit and proper person. The Council will work to the assumption that the landlord is a fit and proper person, unless there is reason to believe that the landlord or agent has committed offences of: -  
  + - Fraud
    - Other dishonesty
    - Violence
    - Unlawful possession and or supply of illegal or controlled drugs
    - Offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003
    - Unlawful discrimination
    - Illegal Eviction or Harassment
* Where the property would fall under mandatory or additional HMO licencing, the landlord has licensed the premises.
* The landlord or agent must not have hindered the principles of housing law, such as failing to maintain tenancies such that Housing Renewals have been required to take enforcement action.
* The Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement is a standard agreement and does not contain unfair or unreasonable terms. A copy of the tenancy agreement will be required before the tenant signs the agreement.
* The landlord lodges any deposit paid by the tenant into a tenancy deposit protection scheme and provides confirmation that this has been done.

**APPENDIX 2 – Factors considered when assessing suitability of an offer**

The Council will consider the following factors when considering the suitability of accommodation for homeless applicants with the applicant’s circumstances being considered against available properties to ensure that best use is made of such vacancies. Where a property is suitable for more than one applicant the Council will identify the applicant whose need is best met by the property by considering their current circumstances (see Short Listing of PRS Vacancies), the length of time they have been waiting and the urgency of their situation, as well as:

* Employment: - The location of the property in proximity to the applicant’s employment. Consideration will be given to the work patterns of the applicant, the financial impact of accessing the place of employment from the property and the availability of public transport if employment requires working unsociable hours.
* Provision of care: - Care received or provided by the applicant over and above immediate family support. Consideration will be given as to the level and frequency of care received or provided and the impact of using public transport to receive or give care.
* Education: - Educational establishments attended by the applicant and their household. In general it is deemed to be reasonable to expect a household member to change school or educational establishment. Consideration will be given to the viability of maintaining the existing educational establishment and travelling from the property. It is recognised that it may not always be appropriate to require household members in receipt of education to change educational establishments. In these circumstances careful consideration will be given to where the student is at key points in their education such as the final year before exams or where a child has a statement which requires special educational needs to be met that cannot be met elsewhere.
* Medical treatment: - Specialist medical treatment being received by the applicant or a member of their household. Consideration will be given to the proximity to the property of any medical facility attended on a regular basis for treatment, where treatment cannot be provided either in their home or closer to the property together with any additional costs which may be incurred through relocation further away from the treatment facility.
* Support and the well-being of the household. - Consideration will be given to any support received by the household which is not formalised support but which has a significant impact on the household’s wellbeing and to be without it would have a detrimental effect on their health and wellbeing.
* Access to local services required by the household: - Consideration will be given to any increased in travel arrangements or costs through relocation to the offered property.
* Affordability: - The property must be considered affordable for the household, based on their income and benefit entitlement.
* Size of property: - The property must be suitable for the size of the household and will be assessed under the Local Housing Allowance size criteria to ensure that there is no unreasonable shortfall in rent due to under-occupation.
* The requirement for aids and adaptations: - To assist the applicant or a member of their household who may be disabled or have mobility issues. Consideration will be given to the feasibility of adapting the property. Where the applicant or member of their household does not presently require adaptations but there is a likelihood that they may do so in the next 12 months then the potential need for adaptation will be considered.
* In the interests of creating sustainable communities: - Where the Council are satisfied that, in respect of an applicant, there are overriding management reasons which will not serve the interests of the applicant or the community.

**East Hampshire District Council**

**Severe Weather Emergency Protocol**

**Rough Sleeper Reporting**

Not everyone who is homeless or sleeping rough is aware that there are services available to help them.

If someone is concerned about someone who is sleeping rough, or they are sleeping rough themselves and are in need of help, they can report this through the [Streetlink website](http://www.streetlink.org.uk/) ([www.streetlink.org.uk](http://www.streetlink.org.uk)) or by calling 0300 500 0914.

They will be asked to provide as much information as possible about the location of the person they have seen sleeping rough such as the town or postcode; street name and nearest building number; a description of where they are sleeping rough (i.e. bench outside supermarket); and what time of day/night they have seen them sleeping rough.

The information they provide will be reported to Havant Borough Council’s Housing Services team who will arrange for the rough sleeper to be approached by outreach services, so there is no need for them to do this themselves. By doing so they will be linked with local services and be offered the appropriate advice and assistance to end their rough sleeping.

However, if it is thought that the person is in immediate risk of harm or danger or needs urgent medical attention, 999 should be called.

**Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)**

Housing authorities are required to ensure that there is provision in place for rough sleepers during periods of extreme weather to prevent people dying on the streets in the cold or extreme heat.

The SWEP is triggered when the night time temperature is forecast by the Met Office to be zero degrees Celsius or below for three consecutive nights.  This temperature is monitored by the council’s Emergency Management and Housing Services teams who will also monitor any other extreme weather conditions which may also trigger the SWEP such as torrential rain/flooding etc.

**Eligibility Criteria**

During the period of the SWEP the rough sleeper is not required to demonstrate eligibility for assistance as homeless (including whether they have any recourse to public funds), priority need, intentionality or local connection.

However, the rough sleeper must:

* Be at risk if they continue to sleep rough during the course of the severe weather;
* have nowhere to sleep indoors during the course of the severe weather (indoors does not include cars, sheds or garages);
* agree to the assistance offered by the council.

**Procedure**

If the rough sleeper meets the above criteria they will be offered emergency accommodation for the duration of the severe weather.

Rough sleepers requiring assistance can make contact during office hours with the Housing Options team by calling the Housing Team based at Penns Place Petersfield or telephoning 01730 266551 or outside of office hours they can use the council’s emergency contact telephone number 07850 358156.  Their circumstances will be assessed so as to determine the most suitable accommodation to be provided.

All clients placed into emergency accommodation when the SWEP is in operation will be referred to Two Saints so that contact can be arranged for ongoing support.

The weather forecast will be checked daily and once the minimum temperature is predicted to have risen above zero degrees Celsius, emergency accommodation will no longer be provided.

The rough sleeper will be offered housing advice and assistance from the Housing Options team and the outreach services to deal with their longer-term issue of homelessness.

If any incidents of anti-social behaviour or unacceptable behaviour are shown during the course of the time that emergency accommodation is being provided which may cause it to be withdrawn, the assistance being provided will be reviewed by the council to see if there are any alternative ways to prevent rough sleeping during the severe weather whilst at the same time managing the risks imposed.

**Emergency Accommodation Offered**

Accommodation offered will be dependant on what is available during the period of SWEP. The Council endeavours to work with accommodation providers and local community organisations to ensure that suitable accommodation with an element of support is available. Where this is not available the council may utilise Bed and Breakfast accommodation in either local independent or commercial establishments. Whilst every effort will also be made to provide accommodation within the borough, due to the lack of accommodation available it may be that this has to be provided out of borough. Where this is the case, and if required and appropriate, support will be provided to facilitate travel to that accommodation.