**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 comply with the statutory requirement to do so, and sets out information regarding homelessness within the District to take 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

**Legal Requirements**

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 – March 2019. A broad range of information collection techniques have been used to inform this review, including:

* Reviewing the 2014 Homelessness Strategy
* Service/performance data
* Consultation with service users, 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 1,211 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.

**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 is comprised of 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 of 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.

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 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 in 2019)** | | | | | | |
| **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 |

**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.

**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 life.

**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 reviewed this accommodation and a specific building has been identified and can be utilised for singles. They are reviewing 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.

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:

* Workshop with a range of stakeholders held in October 2018.
* Survey of service users.
* Providing the draft Review and inviting comments and feedback prior to the creation of the Strategy.
* Session with Housing Options 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, a workshop was organised and held in October 2018. 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 to feed into the review.

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 both East Hampshire District Council and Havant Borough Council areas. 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 improved.

The outcome of this process will enable 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 invited to the workshop 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 from the workshop:

* 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 are 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.

**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 since the last strategy**

East Hampshire District Council has re-designed homelessness services since the last Homelessness Strategy was published:

* Introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
* Duty to Refer – consistent approach across Hampshire to ensure that process is easy to access.
* 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**

|  |
| --- |
| **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 3**

**Affordable Housing Statement**

**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 compared 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 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.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 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 |