

Tendring
District Council



**HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION
& ROUGH SLEEPING
STRATEGY 2020-2024**

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Foreword

(Portfolio Holder for Housing)

Last year, I was privileged to attend a Homelessness Stakeholder event at Clacton Town Hall. It gave me an opportunity to meet representatives from the statutory and voluntary sectors as well as our specialist homelessness advisor from the Ministry and Housing, Communities and Local Government. The event highlighted the issues facing the district in terms of reducing homelessness and rough sleeping and how all agencies could work together to tackle one of the blights on our society. I was impressed by the commitment of all those attending the event to reduce homelessness in the district and I was especially impressed by the commitment and dedication of council staff to meeting the needs of people at risk of homelessness.

Homelessness is caused by a multitude of factors and affects all parts of our district. Whilst we are proud of our district and recognise it is a great place to live in, work in and visit, we have seen an increase in homelessness in recent years and the social and economic consequences that homelessness brings. The Council has a proud record of preventing and tackling homelessness but we recognise that we can do more. Our housing strategy sets out our plans to deliver more affordable and other housing over the next five years and the plans we have to deliver more homes will help us in tackling homelessness in our local communities. Whilst we all accept that housing is not just about bricks and mortar and that there is a need to approach housing and homelessness in a more holistic manner, we do need more accommodation in all sectors to help us reduce homelessness in the district and reduce the impact homelessness and rough sleeping has on our people and communities.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has brought more challenges and pressures on the Council and as a consequence we have all had to re-focus our efforts on how we tackle homelessness and rough sleeping. The legislation puts a strong emphasis on preventing homelessness and we accept there is a need to intervene earlier to prevent homelessness in the district. Whilst the legislation places duties on the Council to tackle homelessness, as a society, we all need to understand homelessness better and the reasons why it occurs. Educating our communities and stakeholders on homelessness and its impact on our communities is a key priority.

Reducing homelessness and rough sleeping requires a partnership approach and the Council, as a community leader, will facilitate and encourage agencies to work together with us to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping. We are fortunate that we have local stakeholders and agencies engaged with the Council to tackle these issues.

Rough sleeping remains an issue for the district and whilst the numbers of people sleeping rough are low compared to other areas, we recognise that we need to intervene quicker to respond to rough sleeping and more importantly, we need to do more to prevent it in the first place. We will implement any changes proposed by central government as part of its Rough Sleeping Strategy and ensure that the priorities in this strategy have a positive impact on our communities and our resident's lives. The Coronavirus pandemic has presented a number of challenges around homelessness and the Council has responded to guidance from central government and has had to adapt working practices accordingly. Whilst measures such as extending notice periods and suspending possession proceedings are welcomed, a partnership approach to tackling future homelessness will be more necessary than ever.

Councillor Paul Honeywood

Portfolio Holder for Housing



Executive Summary

The Council is required by the Homelessness Act 2002 to review homelessness in its area and deliver a strategic approach to tackle, prevent and reduce homelessness and rough sleeping.

Tendring District Council is proud of its record of providing assistance and support to those residents who approach us for help because of homelessness. What is becoming clear is that it is increasingly difficult to assist residents approaching for help because of the increasing cost of accommodation, the lack of affordable housing in the district and the impact of welfare reforms on some of our most vulnerable residents. Homelessness can have catastrophic consequences, not only for the individual, but for their families and communities and the cost to society can be prohibitive. Homelessness can not only lead to a deterioration of physical and mental health, but can impact on an ability to gain and maintain employment and our children's educational attainment and life prospects.

This Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been developed following recent changes to the way local authorities assess homelessness and deliver services in their areas. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 made the most fundamental changes to homelessness legislation since 1977 and all local authorities have had to adapt and respond to these changes and the new challenges they have brought.

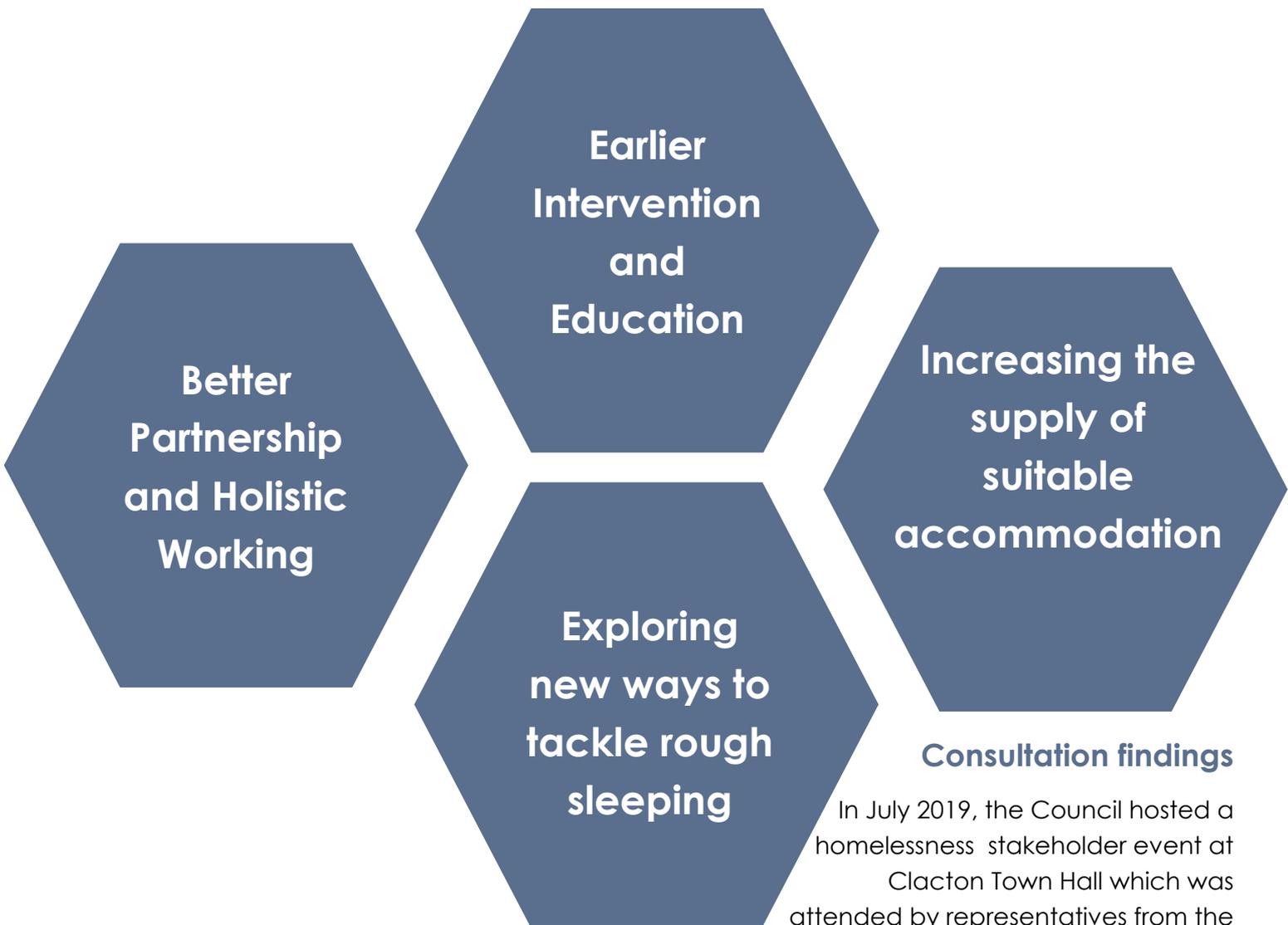
Whilst Tendring is a great place to live, work and visit, it has some distinct challenges which the Council needs to address. The district rates highly on the Index of Multiple Deprivation and in September 2019, Jaywick Sands was confirmed again by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government as the most deprived ward in England. Although Jaywick Sands is the most deprived area in the UK, other parts of the district suffer from deprivation and it is estimated that 1 in 7 people in the district live in a deprived area and 1 in 5 children in the district live in poverty.

Homelessness has increased in recent years and the number of households owed a homelessness duty and the number placed in temporary accommodation has increased significantly. Whilst the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 placed additional burdens on the Council, it is the loss of and lack of suitable accommodation in the private sector and the cost of the private rented sector that is primarily responsible for the increase in demand. Rough sleeping is the most extreme form of homelessness and whilst the numbers sleeping rough in the district are low, the Council is keen to explore new methods of working with the most vulnerable homeless clients.

The Council will soon adopt a new Housing Strategy 2020-2025 for the district "Delivering Homes To Meet The Needs of Local People". The strategy will set out the Council's ambition to increase the number of affordable homes in the district over the next five years which will assist the Council in tackling homelessness in all parts of the district. The strategy can be viewed at www.tendringdc.gov.uk/housing/strategies-and-policies



Whilst the housing strategy sets out the Council's ambitions for the housing market in the district, this strategy will specifically focus on reducing homelessness and ending rough sleeping. In order to meet these challenges, the Council has identified four key priorities for reducing homelessness and rough sleeping as follows:



Consultation findings

In July 2019, the Council hosted a homelessness stakeholder event at Clacton Town Hall which was attended by representatives from the statutory and voluntary sectors in the

district as well as the Portfolio Holder for Housing. We

welcomed our specialist advisor from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government who gave a talk on the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017: "One Year On" and a presentation was given on the Council's draft Housing Strategy. Over 25 people attended the event and they were asked to feedback on what they felt the priorities should be for the Council in drafting this strategy. The feedback given by the agencies attending the event has helped shape the priorities in this Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy. The Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy

went out to public consultation at the end of December 2019 for a period of six weeks. The consultation period was extended to allow presentations to community groups who requested more detail on the priorities identified in the strategy. The consultation responses received were mainly positive and supported the priorities identified in the strategy. The draft strategy was presented to the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13th January 2020. The Committee recommended to Cabinet that they have the opportunity to scrutinise the strategy and make recommendations to the Portfolio Holder for Housing.



Part 1 – Homelessness

Homelessness has become a higher profile issue in recent years. In August 2018, the Government issued its Rough Sleeping Strategy committing to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and to end it altogether by 2027. Homelessness continues to increase nationally, regionally, and in the Tendring district as well. The number of households accepted for a full housing duty by the Council in 2013/14 was 24 and this increased to 102 in 2017/18. The Council regularly provides data to central government on homelessness activity in the district, but the data does not provide a total overview of homelessness in the area.

For a lot of people, the obvious expression of homelessness is rough sleeping but this does not necessarily define what homelessness means. Homelessness is defined in legislation, specifically the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), but it is important to acknowledge that homelessness comes in many forms and often a lot of homelessness is hidden from society. Expressions like “sofa surfing” are now commonly used but it does not alter the fact that a “sofa surfer” is a person without a home to call their own. The same would apply to the family who has had to move in with relatives because they lost their last settled accommodation or the household who has accommodation but cannot remain in their home because it is not safe to do so. The definition of homelessness is, therefore, complex.

Homelessness Reduction Act

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 brought in the most fundamental changes to the homelessness legislation in a generation. The changes brought in by the Act can be summarised as follows:

- Changed the definition of threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days
- Required the Council to assess the reasons for homelessness as well as the client’s housing and wider support needs.
- Required the Council to agree a personalised housing plan with the client setting out the steps the Council and the client would take to prevent or relieve their homelessness
- The act introduced a new “prevention” and “relief” duty which requires the Council to proactively help clients to remain in their homes or support them to move to alternative accommodation.
- The “prevention duty” aims to prevent a client threatened with homelessness from becoming homeless. The Council must take steps to help the client to remain in their home or move seamlessly to alternative accommodation before the loss of the home. The duty lasts for 56 days but may be extended if the Council continues with efforts to prevent homelessness.
- The “relief duty” is owed to all households who are homeless and need help to secure accommodation. The duty lasts for 56 days and can only be extended by the Council if the client does not qualify for the main homelessness duty.
- Specified public authorities are now required to refer anyone they consider to be threatened with homelessness within 56 days or homeless to the Council under what is called the “duty to refer”
- The Council is required to provide more detailed data to central government on homelessness activity to facilitate future policy development.
- A new code of guidance for local authorities was issued to local authorities in February 2018 which Council's must have regard to in exercising their functions under the homelessness legislation.

The impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act on the Council

There is no doubt that the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 positively intended to focus local authorities to prevent and relieve homelessness in their areas. Following the introduction of the Homelessness Act 2002, the Council adopted a preventative approach to tackling homelessness in the district. The Council always kept its core homelessness assessment and housing options service in house and offered advice and assistance to all members of the community who approached for advice and assistance. Households who were assessed as not being owed a duty with accommodation such as those not in "priority need" or those found to be "intentionally homeless" were still offered advice and financial assistance to find accommodation to prevent or relieve their homelessness.

The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 meant that the Council had to fundamentally review its housing options and homelessness service and the following changes were adopted:



Whilst the numbers approaching the Council for assistance have remained constant, the provisions of legislation have meant that more in-depth casework is required with each client. There is also no doubt that the legislation created extra financial burdens on the Council and we were assisted with extra funding by central government as a result.



Welfare Reform

The Welfare and Work Reform Act 2012 introduced a number of measures to reduce the level of benefit payable to low income households and households reliant on benefits. The changes have put a limit on the amount of benefit payable towards housing costs at a time when, especially in the private sector, housing costs have increased and continue to increase. This leaves many low income households struggling to pay their housing costs. In terms of homelessness, some of the most significant measures have been as follows:

Benefit Cap

The benefit cap restricts the maximum amount of benefit a household can receive. The cap in Tendring is now £20,000 per annum for families and £13,400 for single people. The cap does not apply to households where the claimant works at least 16 hours per week or receives certain disability benefits.

Social Sector Size Criteria

Commonly referred to as the "bedroom tax". It applies a benefit reduction for council and other registered provider tenants who are of working age and who are deemed to have a spare bedroom or more. The Council's Housing Allocations Policy gives a high priority to households affected to move to smaller accommodation but the lack of affordable housing in the district does not necessarily provide a speedy solution for those affected.

Local Housing Allowance

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is the maximum level of housing benefit that can be claimed in the private sector in a local area. The LHA rates were capped in April 2016 for four years which means that as rents have increased in the private sector, the level of benefit has remained constant. This has meant that private accommodation has become unaffordable for lower income households and contributed to an increase in homelessness.

The shared room rate

Single people under the age of 35 can only claim the shared accommodation rate in the private sector. This means that they can only receive £71.34 per week in this district, even if they live in self-contained accommodation. There are exemptions in place for households in specific circumstances such as those in supported accommodation, those who have recently left care and those in receipt of certain disability payments.

Universal Credit

Universal Credit (UC) was rolled out during the Summer of 2018. It changed a number of benefits (including housing benefit and local housing allowance), that were previously claimed separately and paid weekly. Claimants are now paid monthly instead of weekly and locally, tenants who have moved onto UC have faced significant delays in their housing costs being paid which has increased homelessness.

Rent reduction

The Council (as a stock retained landlord) and other registered providers were required to reduce rents by 1% each year for a period of 4 years from April 2016. Whilst this reduced the benefit bill nationally, it severely impacted on the Council's ability to deliver new council housing in the district at a time when homelessness was increasing and when new affordable homes were desperately needed.

Other legislation:

Part VII Housing Act 1996

This is the legislation that sets out the Council's responsibilities to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. It has since been amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, Localism Act 2011 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Homelessness Act 2002

This is the legislation that requires the Council to adopt a homelessness strategy for its area. It also changed provisions relation to the housing register and allocations.

Equality Act 2010

The act provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all. It protects individuals with designated "protected characteristics" from discrimination and the Council must have regard to the Act in exercising its functions.

Localism Act 2011

The act gave local authorities the power to set their own eligibility criteria on their housing registers in relation to residency requirements. The legislation also gave the Council the power to end its main housing duty to the homeless by arranging a suitable offer of accommodation in the private sector.

Care Act 2014

This legislation requires the Council to promote well-being when carrying out our care or support functions when working with clients. The act specifically refers to the suitability of living accommodation and as such, the Council must have regard to the suitability of a client's living accommodation in line with the act.

De-regulation Act 2015

This act prevents landlords from serving notices in retaliation for complaints made about the condition of the tenant's property. It also amended the rules regarding the validity of notices requiring possession and requires landlords to prove they have complied with statutory requirements if they wish to evict their tenants.

Tenants Fees Act 2019

This act prevented the charging of fees by landlords and agents to tenants seeking or looking to renew accommodation and only allows fees to be charged as prescribed by the act.

The Pledge to End Rough Sleeping

The Government adopted a Rough Sleeping Strategy in August 2018. The Government pledged to halve rough sleeping by 2022 (the end of that Parliament) and to end rough sleeping altogether by 2027. £27 million of

funding was committed to fund Housing First models in the cities of Liverpool Manchester and the West Midlands. The strategy is centred around three core pillars, **Prevention, Intervention & Recovery**. Since 2010, the numbers of people sleeping rough has increased nationally by 165% despite a drop of 2% in the last twelve months. We await the results of the evaluation of the Housing First models but it is anticipated that local authorities will be required to adopt a Housing First or similar model in the future as the model was first developed in Finland where it proved very successful in tackling rough sleeping.

Coronavirus Act 2020

The Coronavirus Act 2020 has brought in a number of measures that will impact on homelessness and the government has issued a wide variety of guidance to local councils regarding homelessness and housing. In Schedule 29 of the Act, the government has legislated to:

- Extend notice periods to at least 3 months for most tenancies
- Suspended possession proceedings for rented and mortgaged accommodation for a period of 90 days.
- Issued a temporary ban on mortgage repossessions and homeowners can request a 3 month payment holiday

Separate regulations have also temporarily revoked the minimum income floor for self-employed people who need to apply for Universal Credit as a consequence of the pandemic and have increased Local Housing Allowance rates so that they are guaranteed to cover at least 30 per cent of local market rates.

In a letter to all local authorities dated 26th March 2020, the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government asked local authorities to urgently procure accommodation for people living on the streets and ensure that appropriate support is in place to prevent the spread of Covid-19 for this client group.

Part 2 - The local strategic setting

There are a number of local strategic documents which have been developed which will impact on this strategy. These include

Corporate Plan 2020-2024

The Council adopted a new Corporate Plan 2020-2024 in January 2020. The vision puts community leadership at the heart of everything we do through the delivery of high quality, affordable services and working positively with others and Tending4 Growth, a whole-council ethos to promote and support economic growth in the district.

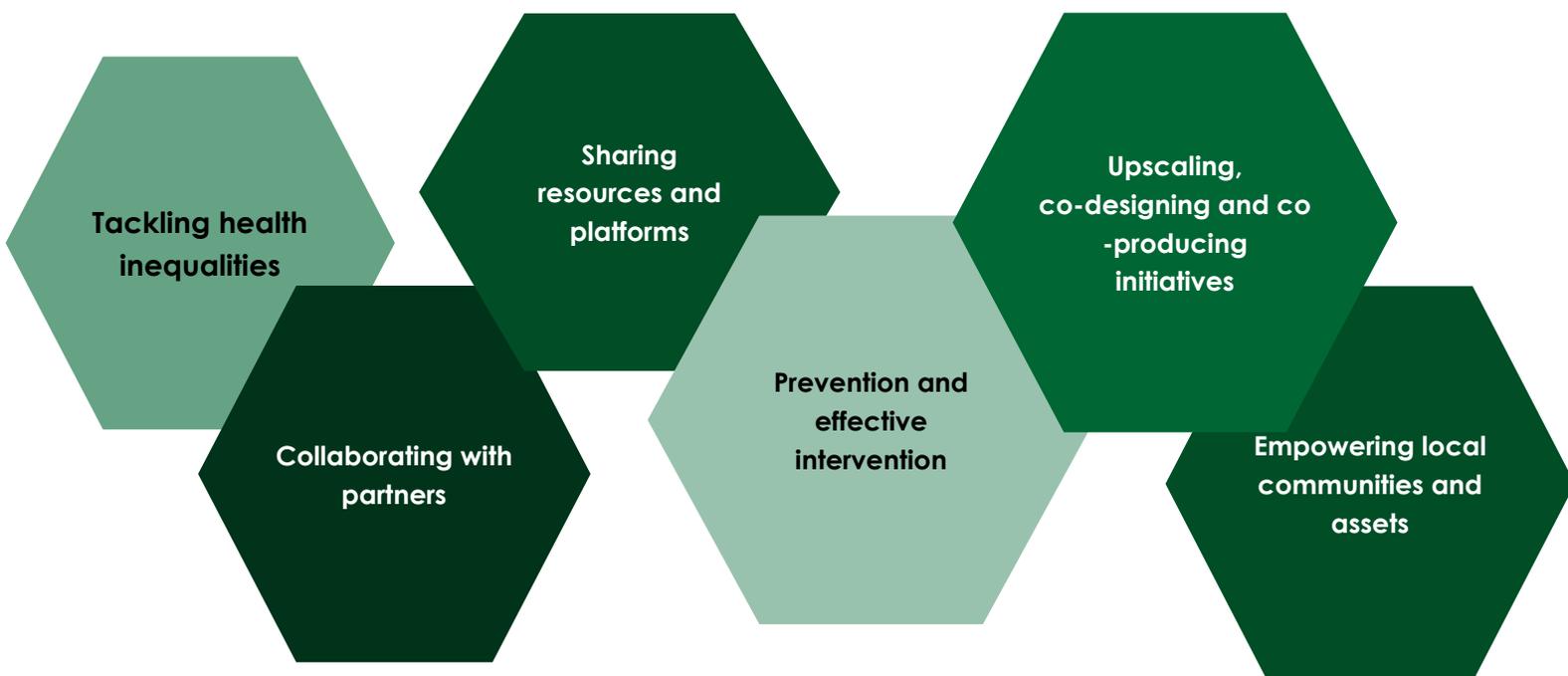
The Corporate Plan sets out ambitions in five key areas:

- Delivering high quality services
- Community leadership through partnerships
- Building sustainable communities for the future
- Strong finance and governance and;
- A growing and inclusive economy

As a community leader, the Council will deliver high quality affordable services and work positively with others including partnership working on education, health, community safety and housing.

Tending Health & Well-being Strategy 2018-20

The Tending Health and Well-being Strategy 2018-20 sets out a partnership approach to tackling pressing health issues in the district. It seeks to build on existing good work to ensure improved health outcomes for our communities. The core strategic principles set out in the strategy are:



The Council recognises that good, decent affordable housing and tackling and reducing homelessness and rough sleeping can improve health outcomes for our communities.

Livewell Essex

Livewell is a campaign designed to engage communities, families and individuals with the aim of providing information about all that is on offer in Essex to improve health and wellbeing.

All Essex Local Authorities and our partners have come together to collaborate on the health and well-being agenda and work towards achieving better health outcomes for people across the district.

Livewell is comprised of 6 key themes including:

startwell - Giving children the best start in life. Endeavors to help families have the best start in life.

bewell - People of all ages, shapes, sizes and abilities can benefit from being physically active. Encourages more people to undertake regular physical activity, which will in turn produce longer term health benefits.

eatwell - Healthy eating means consuming the right type and quantity of food from all food groups in order to lead a healthy life. Raising awareness across the district about healthier eating.

feelwell - A state of mental wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her potential and can cope with the normal stresses of life.

staywell - Clinical wellbeing, a state of health. Working together with the community and professionals to ensure our residents have access to the best clinical services.

agewell - Plan now for the future, for a healthier retirement. Endeavors to encourage people to look at improving their health and wellbeing now, to be able to lead a better quality of life in the future.

Revised Housing Allocations Policy 2019

The Council has revised its Housing Allocations Policy, first adopted in November 2013, to ensure that households owed a prevention, relief or main housing duty are awarded priority on the housing register. The revisions to the policy have also taken on board changes

in guidance and case law so that households owed a main housing duty are not required to meet the residency requirement of three years which has been in place since the original policy was adopted in November 2013. The Government's Domestic Abuse Bill recently had its second reading in Parliament and will place new duties on council's to offer support to victims of domestic abuse. It is anticipated that further changes to the Housing Allocations Policy will be required once this legislation takes effect.

Essex Prevents

Essex Prevents is an initiative by Essex County Council, in partnership with borough and district councils, which is designed to foster a county-wide approach to tackling and reducing homelessness across the county. The project aims to:

- Recognise those groups most at risk of homelessness to develop earlier intervention and prevention
- Improve communication and understanding between partners to reduce risks and improve outcomes for all involved, e.g. multi-agency training, pooling resources and protocols
- Open, honest, transparent services that enable people to take responsibility, make considered choices and manage expectations
- Improve the flow of information and management of cases, removing duplication and streamlining the way we work between organisations
- Improve the understanding and prioritisation of the commissioning of support services between organisations that prevent homelessness
- Tackling the perception and stigma of homelessness and affordable housing by collectively identifying need throughout Essex
- Using the information we collate to drive changes to organisational plans and lobby collectively for improvements to wider policy such as welfare reform, social care and local plans.

The County Council has also worked in partnership with district and borough council's to develop protocols for 16/17 year olds who are homeless and families with children who are intentionally homeless. **The County Council, with other district and borough councils, recently signed a joint protocol across Essex for people being released from custody.**

Part 3 – Our District

The Tendring district has an area of approximately 130 square miles with a coastline of 60 kilometres. The district is in North East Essex and borders Suffolk to the North as well as being approximately 70 miles from London. The district consists of a number of coastal and riverside towns and a largely rural heartland.

The largest urban area is Clacton-on-Sea. Tendring is also home to the international port of Harwich and the coastal towns of Frinton-on-Sea and Walton-on-the-Naze. The district contains the historic port of Brightlingsea and also Manningtree which borders Suffolk on the Stour Estuary. Our rural heartland contains many distinctive villages and hamlets of varying size.

Social indicators

Tendring has a higher than average number of households who are claiming benefits or who constitute workless households. This is not surprising given the pockets of deprivation in the district. The number of unemployed households in the district is estimated to be 5.3% of the population compared to 3.6% for the rest of the East of England and 4.2% nationally. The district also has concentrated areas of multi-generational worklessness. There are 6,800 workless households that have a child under the age of 16 which is the highest number in Essex. 12% of children under the age of 16 live in a workless household. 24% of children in the district live in a low income family which is the highest percentage in the county.

Tendring suffers particularly from health inequalities, especially in its most deprived communities. A high proportion of the district's population (67.5% of adults) are classified as overweight or obese and the district has the highest level of physically inactive adults in the county. Mental health and wellbeing is another concern in the district. Tendring has one of the highest suicide rates in the country (it was ranked 4th out of 324 districts in England in 2015/16) and also has higher than average admissions to hospital for alcohol-related harm. Tendring has a high prevalence of mental health disorders in children, which is not surprising given the high levels of child poverty and deprivation in the district. Mental health disorders in children have an impact on educational attainment and Tendring generally ranks poorly compared to the rest of Essex in terms of educational attainment.

Earnings in Tendring are lower than the regional average with the mean earned income for someone in employment being £28,116 per annum. The average household income for the district per annum is £29,071. As local housing allowance rates were frozen until 2020 and rents in the private sector continue to increase, the private sector has become unaffordable for a growing number of households.



Housing need & demand

The Council has a housing register which is used to allocate council and other registered provider accommodation. The housing register also gives an indication of the need for housing in the district. In November 2013, the Council adopted a new Housing Allocations Policy which introduced a residency requirement for households seeking to join the housing register. It is now a requirement that a person resides in the district for at least 3 years before applying for housing and that they have an assessed housing need. There are some exceptions to this rule prescribed by statute.

As at 1st March 2020, there were 1898 households on the housing register. The bedroom need is broken down as follows:

1 bedroom	927 households	49%
2 bedroom	505 households	27%
3 bedroom	318 households	17%
4 bedroom	118 households	6%
5 bedroom +	30 households	1%

The demand for housing is clearly weighted towards 1 bedroom accommodation. However, of the 927 households registered for 1 bedroom accommodation, 491 (53%) are households over the age of 60. This demonstrates that there is a need to address the housing needs of our older population especially as the trend will be for people to live longer and that one bedroom accommodation should be accessible and designed to meet long-term disabilities.

493 households (26%) on the housing register have a physical or mental health condition made worse by their housing. Furthermore, the number of employed households on the housing register has increased year on year from when the Housing Allocations Policy was adopted and 14% (265 households) have an adult member in employment. This is an indication of the difficulties in accessing home ownership in the district as households who would like to buy a home see affordable rented housing as their only option.

Our housing market

The housing market in Tendring is dominated by owner-occupied accommodation. The most recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment published in December 2015 stated that the tenure breakdown in the district was as follows:

Tenure	Number of households	Approx. %
Owner-occupation	44,569	70%
Private rented	12,968	20%
Social/affordable rent	5,623	9%
Shared ownership	79	1%

In terms of the rental market, it is demonstrated that the private rented sector is currently the key player in terms of choice and availability. The number of social/affordable rented homes is much lower than other districts/boroughs in the Housing Market Area (Braintree, Chelmsford & Colchester). The number of shared ownership homes is very low compared to other areas.

Whilst the private rented sector is the key player in terms of choice and availability, the private rented sector in Tendring suffers from condition and repair issues. According to the Department of Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 10.6% of households in the district live in fuel poverty which impacts on their health and well-being. It is estimated that 21% of the homes in the district contain a Category 1 Hazard as defined in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System and that the cost of treating these hazards would be approximately £49m. Furthermore, treating and remedying these hazards would save the NHS approximately £2.3m per year. The Council believes that good health starts at home regardless of tenure or sector. 30% of homes in the district have an EPC rating of E or below and are therefore classed as sub-standard.

As at 31st March 2019, there were 5558 affordable rented homes in the district. 3134 are owned by the council and 2424 are owned by other registered providers (housing associations). Of the 2424 properties are owned by other registered providers, 509 are let through the Seaside and County Homes Scheme and are homes built by the former Greater London Council for retired people living in the London Boroughs. They are therefore not available to households living locally and this reduces the potential pool of properties available.

Bedroom	Council	Registered Provider
1 bed	1191	748
2 bed	1034	953
3 bed	897	663
4 bed	9	55
5 bed +	3	5

Affordable housing delivery

The number of affordable homes delivered in the district in the last five financial years has been exceedingly low. The number of homes delivered has been as follows:

Year	Number of homes delivered
2015-16	33
2016-17	5
2017-18	38
2018-19	8
2019-20	81
Total	165



The low delivery of affordable housing in recent years means it is crucial to maximise the number of affordable homes in future years. The most recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment has calculated that the district needs 550 homes per annum, of which 30% (165 homes per annum) should be affordable homes. 10 custom built homes are under construction in Jaywick Sands (5 for rent and 5 homes for discounted sale) and **the Council aspires to deliver a further 200 homes in the district over the next 5 years (a further 100 in Jaywick Sands and 100 in other parts of the district) to help tackle homelessness.** There are a further 162 homes due to be gifted to the Council by 2024. The number of new affordable homes will increase significantly over the course of this strategy and will be a key factor in reducing homelessness and rough sleeping in the district.



Tendrings

Part 4 – Homelessness Review

The causes of homelessness are complex and in developing services to tackle homelessness, it is essential to understand current and future levels of homelessness and the links between the various factors which impact on and create homelessness. In reviewing the levels of homelessness in the district, the Council has had regard to various sources of data, such as data published by central government (census and other data published by the Office of National Statistics and data published by the MHCLG) as well as the data we hold locally on homelessness and housing demand set out earlier in this document. It is this review and the findings below on homelessness data that have informed the strategic priorities for this strategy.

It is important to recognise that, before the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the Council only analysed the causes of homelessness for cases where a formal homelessness application was made as this was the requirement from central government at that time.

Main causes of homelessness data before the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The data prior to the Homelessness Reduction Act shows us that homelessness was increasing in the district prior to the Act coming into force. The ending of a tenancy in the private sector was the main cause of homelessness.

Year	Ending of private rented tenancy	Non-violent relationship breakdown	Parental/Family Eviction	Violence/harassment (including domestic violence and other violence)
2014/15	14	12	12	37
2015/16	20	10	25	27
2016/17	115	18	46	57
2017/18	124	18	49	48

Although they are not the main causes of homelessness, there are two causes of homelessness which consistently create problems for the Housing Solutions team, namely people being discharged from hospital or the care sector at short notice who cannot return home and people being asked to leave caravan/chalet parks because of seasonal restrictions on occupancy or because of site licensing breaches. The Council will work with partners to establish protocols around hospital and care home discharges and explore ways to work with caravan/chalet site owners to prevent breaches of site occupancy rules.

Homelessness prevention cases before the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Homelessness prevention can take many forms. Examples include mediation with families or mediation between landlord and tenants to resolve tenancy disputes. It can also include some financial assistance to resolve arrears problems along with debt advice as well as providing security and safety measures in a property where the occupier is at risk but wishes to remain in their home. Homelessness prevention would also include assisting someone to move to alternative accommodation before they become homeless, for example, by providing help with a deposit.

Year	Homelessness Preventions
2014/15	402
2015/16	351
2016/17	321
2017/18	311

The number of homelessness prevention cases has decreased each year over the four year period. The decrease is attributed to the lack of opportunities to assist households to access private rented accommodation, welfare reforms, increasing rents and the freezing of local housing allowance.

Homelessness Applications and Duties before the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The number of applications and acceptances of the full housing duty shows that homelessness has increased and that the difficulties in assisting households to remain in or move into the private rented sector has been the key factor in increasing homelessness locally.

Year	Homelessness Applications	Full Duty acceptances
2014/15	137	50
2015/16	159	54
2016/17	288	92
2017/18	308	102

Temporary accommodation placements before the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Year	Placements in B&B/Other nightly paid accommodation	Placements in council/other provider stock as temporary accommodation
2014/15	57	42
2015/16	91	46
2016/17	154	73
2017/18	182	86

The numbers placed in emergency and temporary accommodation increased significantly in the four years before the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

Household types making homelessness applications before the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

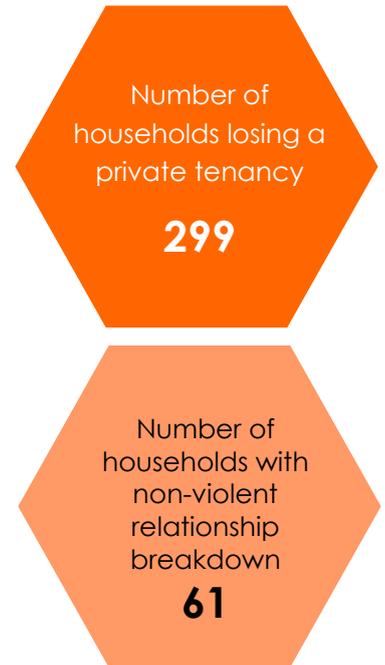
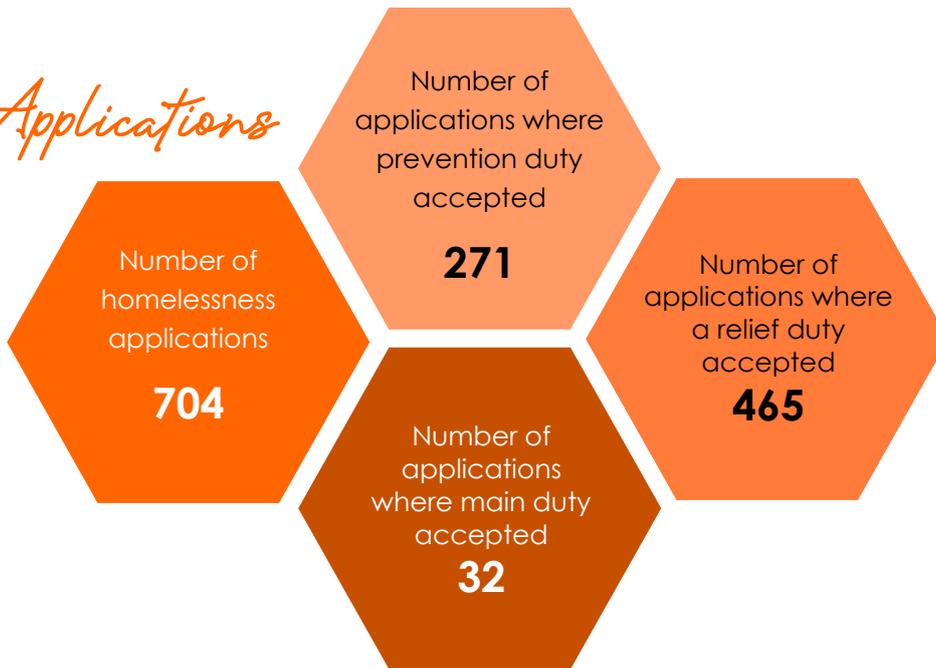
Year	Households with children	Single people	Other Household types
2014/15	84	45	8
2015/16	91	57	11
2016/17	166	100	22
2017/18	176	112	20

This data shows again that homelessness was increasing in the district prior to the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and was affecting all members of our community.

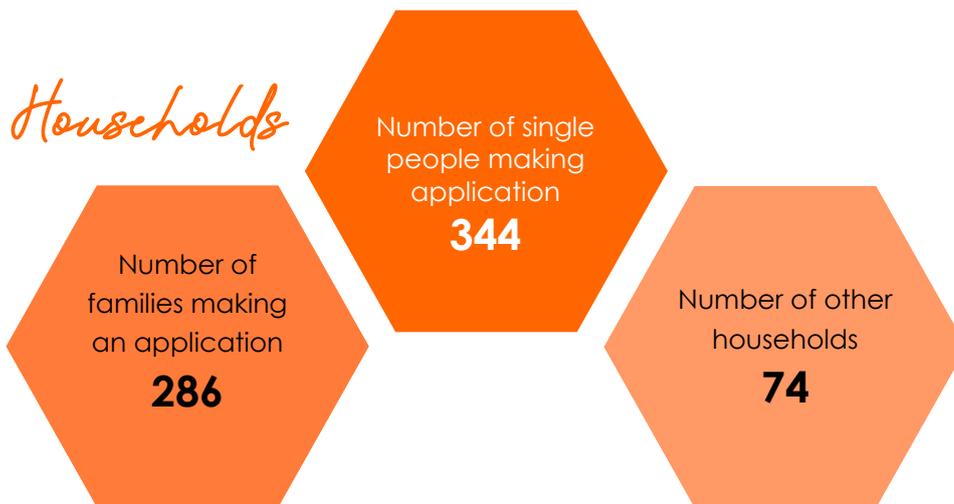


Main Causes

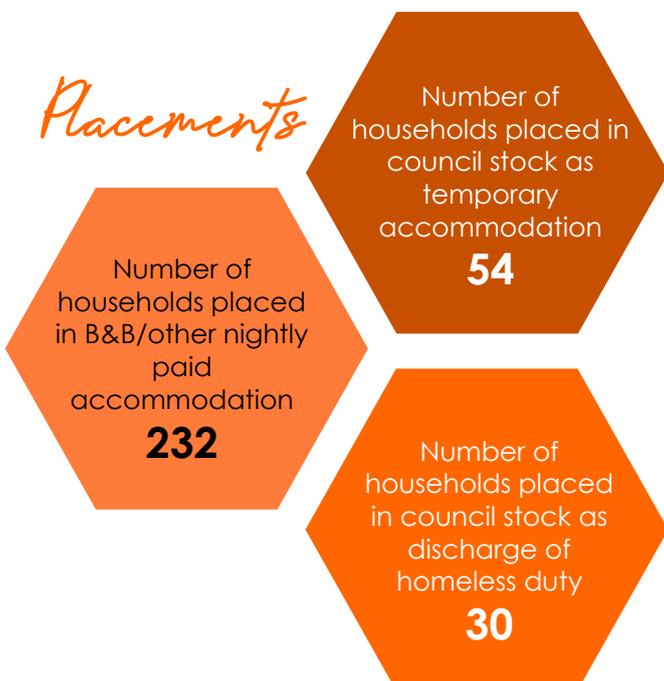
Applications



Households



Placements



It is not surprising that the number of applications to the Council has increased. The reason for this is the fact that the definition of threatened homelessness is now triggered at 56 days as opposed to 28 days. Before the introduction of the Act, the council would be approached by households before they were formally threatened with homelessness and they would be provided with advice on their options and the council would attempt to prevent their homelessness. If they are now threatened with homelessness within 56 days, the council must treat the approach as a formal application and must take steps to prevent the homelessness (part of which is to agree a personalised housing plan with the household).

It is also noticeable that since the Homelessness Reduction Act was passed, the number of single people seeking assistance has overtaken the number of families seeking assistance. Again, this is indicative of the fact that the Act requires a formal application to be taken and is primarily one of the mischiefs that the Act was designed to eliminate and will help address potential rough sleeping.

The number of households placed in B&B or other nightly paid accommodation has increased significantly which would indicate the difficulties both the Council and clients have in sourcing accommodation in the current market. Although the Act has fundamentally changed the way the Council has to tackle homelessness, there is no doubt that loss of and sourcing private or other accommodation is a major concern and this is an area where the Council needs to focus its activity over the next five years.

Duty to Refer

One of the fundamental changes brought in by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 was the "duty to refer" placed on other public authorities to make the local authority aware of a client or service user who was threatened with homelessness within 56 days. The number of referrals received by the Council from 1st October 2018 - 30th September 2019 and from which sector are as follows:

Referral Source	Number of Referrals
Dept. of Works & Pensions/Job Centre Plus	86
Prison Service	61
Hospitals	43
Probation Service	17
Leaving & After Care	8
Other housing provider	8
Rough sleeping charities	3
Other local authorities	2
Forces charities	1
Total	229

The Council's view is that whilst the duty to refer is an important tool in helping to prevent homelessness, there needs to be a better understanding of this duty and awareness of homelessness and that it should be expanded, locally, to include other partners (especially private landlords). Although the Council cannot impose a duty on other non-public bodies, it can certainly encourage partners and stakeholders to make the authority aware of potential and preventable homelessness in its area.

Rough Sleeping Data

Each year, the Council provides data to the MHCLG on the number of rough sleepers in the district. The Council can either do a formal count on a single night or can provide an estimate, again based on a single night in Autumn. The Council has provided an estimate for the last five years and has worked with faith groups and other statutory and voluntary partners to arrive at robust estimates verified by Homeless Link. The numbers submitted to the MHCLG for the last five years are as follows:

Year	Estimated number of rough sleepers
December 2015	7
December 2016	5
December 2017	6
December 2018	6
December 2019	5

Although these figures are relatively low, it is unacceptable that any person should have to sleep rough in the 21st century and therefore the Council will develop services to address rough sleeping and will embrace any recommendations made following the Housing First pilots. In October 2017, following a successful joint bid with Colchester Borough Council, we were able to appoint an Early Response Rough Sleeping Co-Ordinator on a fixed term contract to help tackle rough sleeping in the district and develop new services for rough sleepers.

Homelessness Costs

The impact homelessness can have on an individual, family or community is huge, especially for children. Homelessness is closely linked with other complex and chaotic life experiences, mental health problems, addiction, time spent in prison and the care system and violence. The LGA's report "The Impact of Homelessness on Health" published in September 2017 confirms that homeless households are more likely to experience health inequalities, and poorer health and well-being.

The financial costs to the Council in combatting homelessness have increased dramatically in recent years. In 2014/15, the Council spent £71,382 on nightly paid accommodation. In 2018/19, these costs had risen to £459,265! This is not unique for the Council as nationally, the Local Government Association has reported that spending on nightly paid accommodation has risen from £10.6m in 2009/10 to £93.3m in 2018/19. It is therefore essential that the Council looks to provide cheaper, better and more affordable accommodation as an alternative to nightly paid accommodation. The Council must look at a range of models to deliver accommodation such as working with private investors to deliver housing in the district on leaseback models and using our expertise as landlord to procure and manage accommodation on behalf of other landlords. The Early Response Rough Sleeping Co-ordinator left the Council's employment in January 2020 and commissioning a new service is one of the strategic priorities in this strategy. In January 2020, the Council received £72,485 from the MHCLG to assist in tackling rough sleeping in the district.

The Council has been fortunate to receive funding from the MHCLG to help meet the costs of homelessness in the district and in the run up to the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the amount of funding received increased significantly. Between 2017/19 and 2019/20, the Council will have received just over £1m in Flexible Homelessness Support Grant as well as £272,655 New Burdens funding from the MHCLG. The funding has been used to:

(see on next page)



The Council received £666,189 from the MHCLG in April 2020 to help reduce homelessness and end rough sleeping in the district in the next twelve months.

The Council also uses its Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) Fund to help tackle homelessness in the district. The fund is administered by the Benefits and Revenues Team but they work in partnership with the Housing Solutions team to assist people with housing and other related costs. In 2019/20, the Council spent 99.96% of its fund of £402,811 and of this figure, £244,035 was approved for spending by the Housing Solutions team. The Discretionary Housing Payment Fund allocation for 2020/21 is £579,037.

At a meeting of the full Council in February 2020, a motion was passed to recruit a Housing Early Intervention Officer on a three year contract to support families in critical need when faced with difficult circumstances such as homelessness. This post will sit in the Housing Solutions team and will be a valuable resource to assist the Council to prevent homelessness for some of our most vulnerable households.

The Council realises that it cannot end homelessness on its own and works in partnership with other agencies. In the last year, the Housing Solutions team has worked closely with the Peabody floating support service to meet the housing needs of vulnerable residents in the district. The Council sits on the local Community

Forum which meets to address the needs of the most vulnerable households in Clacton. The Council also sits on the Essex Homelessness Officers Liaison Group and has worked in partnership with the group in recent years to establish county-wide protocols for intentionally homeless families, homeless 16-17 year olds and offenders released from prison.

At the time of writing this strategy, the UK has been affected by the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. As a consequence, the Housing Solutions Team has had to adapt its working practices at a time of social distancing. A new on-line portal has been adapted with our IT provider so that clients and agencies can contact the authority and make an application for assistance without the need for face-to-face interviews. The authority has also used its discretion to accommodate households who it would not normally owe a duty to as would be the case if the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol was in operation. This information is regularly reported to central government. Furthermore, the Council has also procured 22 extra units of nightly paid accommodation to meet this increased demand.

It is important that the Council learns lessons from the pandemic and the Council's response on homelessness will be reviewed and reported to the newly created Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping forum for the district.

Part 5 – Our strategic housing priorities

At our stakeholder event held in July 2019, we asked those attending the event to give us their views on what they felt the strategic priorities should be for the Council in this strategy. Although there were many views expressed, there were some common themes raised, namely:

“Education on expectations concerning housing” “Education on tenancy sustainment”

“Better on-line information” “Earlier Intervention and prevention”

“Working better with landlords” “Better internal and external partnership working”

“Better working partnerships with agencies” “More affordable accommodation”

“Educating agencies on homelessness” “More joined up services required”

“Better support for vulnerable groups” “Free up under-occupied homes”

We have identified the following priorities for this strategy:

1. Earlier Intervention and Education

The best way to tackle homelessness is to prevent it happening in the first place. By the time a client approaches the Council for help, it is often too late and the Council’s response becomes reactive as opposed to pro-active. It is essential that effective preventative services and tools are available to help clients and agencies prevent homelessness and prevent crises from arising. To this end, we feel it is important to focus services on intervening earlier and educating our community on homelessness issues. Our aims are:

To deliver a culture change with regard to homelessness in the district so that homelessness is not just seen as a problem for the housing solutions team.

To identify people at risk at a much earlier stage.

To ensure that clients and agencies have access to the best possible information to help them resolve their housing issues, including homelessness.

To improve awareness and public knowledge of homelessness and housing shortages in the area.

What we will do:

We will review the content on our website to ensure it is up to date, relevant and related to local needs and the local support available.

We will develop self-help tools to assist clients at an early stage to try and resolve their own problems

We will expand on the “duty to refer” to encourage non-statutory partners to make the Council aware of homelessness in the area.

We will visit at least 3 agencies or teams a year to educate on homelessness issues in the district.

We will assess and support households most at risk of losing a tenancy to prevent repeat homelessness and provide holistic support for clients taking on tenancy for the first time.

We will work with partners to develop protocols for those leaving hospital or the care sector to prevent the unnecessary use of nightly-paid accommodation.

We will work with our local landlord forum and letting agencies to make them aware that we can intervene to prevent homelessness arising.

We will promote our Credit Union to encourage clients to save for unforeseen eventualities as opposed to relying on payday lenders or loan sharks.

We will recruit a Housing Early Intervention Officer on a three year contract to support households with critical needs facing homelessness.

2. Better Partnership & Holistic Working

The Council has a good record of working with statutory and non-statutory partners to tackle homelessness issues in the district but one of the themes that came out of our stakeholder event was that we could work better together. Our main partners are Essex County Council, the Department of Works and Pensions, Prisons, the Probation and Youth Offending Service, Next Chapter, Peabody Support, faith groups, drug and alcohol charities and veteran's organisations. We accept that not all households have support needs but we must ensure that support is available for the most vulnerable. There are no easy solutions to eradicate homelessness and so partners must work together. The Council, in its community leadership role, can facilitate better partnership working but all agencies need to be committed to prevent homelessness earlier. Our aims are:

To improve working relationships with partner agencies to end a "them and us" culture

To embed a homelessness prevention approach across the Council

To treat homelessness as a holistic issue and not just a housing issue

To improve the help we can give to landlords who agree to work with us in meeting demand

What we will do:

We will create a new Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping forum for the district.

We will encourage partner agencies to work out of our "Hub" in Clacton to improve partnership working.

We will review our support plans to include issues that are not related to housing e.g health and well-being, and employment issues.

We will continue to attend the local Community Forum to foster better relations with local faith groups and the voluntary and statutory sector.

We will work with the Clacton Town Centre Group to tackle issues in the town relating to homelessness, rough sleeping, street drinking and begging.

We will work with the voluntary and charitable sector to reach out to the most vulnerable and those who may treat the Council with suspicion.

We will develop new partnerships with and services for landlords who are keen to work with the Council to meet demand in the district.



3. Increasing the supply of suitable accommodation

It is becoming harder to assist vulnerable clients with accommodation as the private sector becomes more expensive and there is a shortage of affordable housing available to meet the demand we face. Whilst our ambition is to prevent homelessness in all cases, it is not possible to prevent homelessness in each and every case and therefore we need a supply of accommodation to meet the needs of the homeless and the inadequately housed in the district. All parts of the market can play a part in increasing the supply of accommodation. We have been too reliant on nightly paid accommodation such as B&B accommodation and the cost of this accommodation is becoming too prohibitive. Our aims are:

To increase the number of affordable homes in the district over the course of this strategy

To work with private investors to deliver accommodation at affordable rents to meet increased homelessness demand.

To reduce dependency on nightly-paid accommodation and seek to end its use by the end of this strategy.

To use our expertise as a landlord to procure and manage accommodation on behalf of private landlords.

To work with and support commissioners and other providers to deliver specialist accommodation in the district for the most vulnerable in our community.

What we will do:

We will deliver at least 250 new affordable homes in the district over the course of this strategy.

We will deliver a new incentive scheme to free up family-sized council housing for those seeking to move to the right-size accommodation.

We will review our nomination agreements with other registered providers in the district to maximise affordable housing for local people.

We will increase the number of move-on properties we make available to supported housing partners to free up units of supported accommodation.

We will explore schemes with private investors to

purchase or acquire homes in the private sector and to lease them back to the Council to manage at affordable rents.

We will explore if we can deliver an “in-house” leasing scheme using our expertise as a stock-retained landlord.

We will deliver an extra 30 units of accommodation in our stock as an alternative to nightly paid accommodation.

4. Exploring new ways to tackle rough sleeping

Rough sleeping is the most visible demonstration of homelessness and often the most catastrophic. Although the numbers of people sleeping rough in the district is low compared to other areas, it is important that earlier prevention measures are in place to prevent rough sleeping occurring in the first place. The fact that the numbers are low should not lead to complacency and any instance of a person sleeping rough should be seen as a failure. Our aims are:

To learn from the Housing First pilots and adopt any recommendations for the district.

To have a zero-tolerance approach to rough sleeping.

To prevent rough sleeping in the first place but if not possible to get rough sleepers off the streets as a matter of urgency (a “No Second Night Out” approach).

What we will do:

We will adopt a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol for each year of this strategy.

We will submit funding bids to maintain services in the district.

We will deliver a new rough sleeping outreach service in the district

We will evaluate the lessons we have learnt over the past two years with regard to rough sleeping and implement any necessary changes.

We will provide a small number of “crash beds” in the district so that no person spends a second night on the streets.

We will relocate individuals who have support needs in other areas.

We will promote “Streetlink” to the community and partners and encourage referrals to the council.

Part 6 – Monitoring The Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Some of the actions in this strategy are short-term and can be realised quickly. Others will take a number of years to bear fruition. There can be legislative or policy change at a national or local level that could render some of the actions in the strategy redundant or unachievable. It is therefore important that the strategy responds to changing needs and new actions are agreed as necessary.

The strategy is accompanied by a delivery plan in Appendix 1 of this document which will set out when the actions will be completed and achieved. The strategy and action plan will be reviewed and monitored regularly and a report will be produced and published annually to update the Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping forum, the wider community and other partners on how the strategy is progressing.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Homelessness Reduction & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2024 Delivery Plan

NOTE; THIS DELIVERY PLAN HAS BEEN DEvised AT A TIME WHEN THE COUNTRY IS CONTENDING WITH COVID-19. AS A CONSEQUENCE, TARGET DATES MAY SLIP AND WILL BE AMENDED ACCORDINGLY

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1:

EARLIER INTERVENTION & EDUCATION

Action	Outcome	Risks	Timeframe	Lead Officer(s)	Achieved
Review the Housing Solutions pages on the Council's website	To ensure the information remains relevant and up to date and addresses local needs	Inaccurate information will cause confusion for clients and partners and may hinder clients getting help sooner	Ongoing	Housing Initiatives Officer	
Deliver self-help tools so clients can access help and advice remotely	To ensure client's can get help sooner and to identify their own housing solutions	Likely to need external support and finance	Apr-21	Housing Initiatives Officer/ Communications Officer/Housing Solutions and Allocation Manager	
Develop a "Call Before You Serve" service for landlords in the district	To encourage landlords to contact the Council before serving notice to prevent homelessness	Lack of engagement from landlords	Dec-20	Accommodation Officer/ Housing Solutions and Allocations Manager	

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Action	Outcome	Risks	Timeframe	Lead Officer(s)	Achieved
Deliver a hospital discharge protocol for clients leaving hospital or the care sector in partnership with Essex County Council and the NHS	To reduce the number of households discharged from hospital or the care sector with no fixed address or unsuitable accommodation to return to	Lack of engagement between partners	Dec-21	Housing Solutions and Allocations Manager/ Executive Projects Manager/Older Persons Team Leader/Senior Housing Renewal & Adaptations Officer	
Recruit a Housing Early Intervention Officer to work with households with critical needs	The officer will contribute to the aim of preventing homelessness for vulnerable households	The Covid-19 pandemic may delay the recruitment process	Jul-20	Housing Solutions and Allocations Manager	
Promote the work of the Council's Housing Solutions Team with the public and other agencies to educate on issues around homelessness and rough sleeping	To encourage the public and agencies to seek help or advice earlier and thus increase the chances of preventing homelessness. Encourage non-statutory partners to refer	Lack of engagement from the public or agencies	Ongoing	Housing Solutions and Allocations Manager	

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2:

BETTER PARTNERSHIP AND HOLISTIC WORKING

Action	Outcome	Risks	Timeframe	Lead Officer(s)	Achieved
Develop a new Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping forum for the district	Better engagement from partners and the forum can scrutinise the actions in this strategy	Lack of engagement	Oct-20	Housing Solutions and Allocations Manager/ Executive Projects Manager	
Report to the Homelessness Reduction & Rough Sleeping forum on the impact of Covid -19 on homelessness in the district	To share the impact of the pandemic on the district and to review services in light of changes	The Covid -19 pandemic may delay the forum meeting	Oct-20	Housing Solutions and Allocations Manager	
Develop a risk assessment tool to identify those at risk of losing a tenancy because of rent arrears or ASB.	Reduction in homelessness rough sleeping and repeat homelessness Holistic support can be provided to those most at risk.	Lack of engagement from those tenants identified	Dec-20	Housing Solutions and Allocations Manager/ Housing Manager	

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Action	Outcome	Risks	Timeframe	Lead Officer(s)	Achieved
Develop new personalised support plans to address non-housing related outcomes e.g employment and health and well-being	A more holistic personalised support plan will help improve clients' well-being overall and not just address housing issues	Lack of team resources	Mar-21	Housing Solutions Team	

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3:

INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF SUITABLE ACCOMMODATION

Action	Outcome	Risks	Timeframe	Lead Officer(s)	Achieved
Deliver at least 250 new affordable homes over the course of this strategy	Delivering affordable housing will reduce homelessness and provide long-term stable homes for clients	Downturn in the housing market and a squeeze on funding post Covid-19	Mar-24	Executive Projects Manager	
Deliver a new incentive scheme to free up family sized accommodation	A new incentive scheme will increase the number of larger homes to address homelessness in the district	Lack of new affordable homes being delivered to meet the needs of older tenants	Jan-21	Executive Projects Manager/Housing Solutions and Allocations Manager/Housing Manager/Older Persons Team Leader	
Increase the number of nominations for providers through the housing register	More nominations for providers will reduce homelessness and free up spaces in supported housing	Providers not taking advantage of move-on nominations	Apr-21	Housing Solutions & Allocations Manager/ Senior Housing Solutions & Allocations Officer/ Executive Projects Manager	
Explore the feasibility of setting up an in-house leasing scheme	A leasing scheme will offer a good offer for landlords who want to remain in the private rented sector	Lack of engagement from landlords and financial pressures	Apr-22	Accommodation Officer/ Housing Solutions and Allocations Manager/ Executive Projects Manager	
Deliver 30 units of emergency accommodation within the Council's stock	A better offer for clients and a rental stream for the Council	Failure to deliver will lead to an over-reliance on private nightly paid accommodation	Dec-20	Assistant Corporate Director (Housing and Environment)/ Housing Solutions and Allocations Manager	
Deliver a Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy	Will assist in the reduction of nightly paid accommodation	Lack of alternative provision and funding	Sep-20	Housing Solutions and Allocations Manager	

Action	Outcome	Risks	Timeframe	Lead Officer(s)	Achieved
End the use of nightly paid hotel accommodation by the end of this strategy	A better offer for clients and the Council can meet government targets to not use this type of accommodation	This action will depend on success of other actions in this and other strategies.	Mar-24	Housing Solutions and Allocations Manager/ Accommodation Officer	

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4:

EXPLORING NEW WAYS TO TACKLE ROUGH SLEEPING

Action	Outcome	Risks	Timeframe	Lead Officer(s)	Achieved
Commission a new early response and outreach service for rough sleepers	Rough sleepers can be identified and assessed quicker	Funding is currently only available for 12 months	Jun-20	Housing Solutions and Allocations Manager	
Provide two units of accommodation for rough sleepers in the district through the early response and outreach service	Rough sleepers can be removed from the streets quicker and this will improve clients health and well-being	Lack of engagement from clients	Jun-20	Housing Solutions and Allocations Manager	
Seek funding through future bids to tackle rough sleeping	The early response and outreach service can continue beyond twelve months	An unsuccessful bid will threaten the future or an early response and outreach service	Ongoing	Housing Solutions and Allocations Manager	
Carry out an annual review of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol	The protocol needs to be reviewed annually to ensure it remains effective and fit for purpose	Not reviewing the protocol could lead to criticism and damage the Council's reputation	Each September for each year of this strategy	Housing Solutions and Allocations Manager	
Develop a Housing First Model in the district	Better outcomes for rough sleepers and reduction in rough sleeping	Lack of funding for such a service	Jun-21	Housing Solutions and Allocations Manger/ Executive Projects Manager/ Commissioned Support Service (TBA)	