



Winchester
City Council

Housing Services

Preventing Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy

2019-2024

Contents

1. Vision	3
2. Priorities.....	3
3. Background.....	3
4. Overview.....	3
5. Housing Need.....	6
6. Rough Sleeping.....	6
7. Consultation & Review Process.....	8
8. Delivering the strategies & challenges:	
Universal credit	9
Funding cuts.....	10
Homelessness Reduction Act (2017)	10
Duty to Refer.....	10
Rough sleeping.....	11
Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM).....	11
Affordability & Housing Supply.....	12
9. Priorities & actions:	
Provide early intervention & support to prevent homelessness.....	12
Promoting systems change through partnership arrangements.....	13
Ensuring a sufficient supply of accommodation.....	14
Provide the right services so that no person needs to sleep rough in Winchester.....	15
10. Links to other Strategies and relevant policies.....	17
11. Resources.....	19
12. Monitoring and Review.....	19
13. Publication.....	19
14. Action Plan.....	20

Foreword by Portfolio Holder **To be approved.**

Our Vision: **'Everyone in the district to receive meaningful advice to prevent homelessness and access to services to ensure that no one needs to sleep rough'**

Priorities

- 1. Provide early intervention and support to prevent homelessness**
- 2. Promoting systems change through partnership arrangements**
- 3. Ensuring sufficient supply of accommodation**
- 4. Provide the right support and services so that no person needs to sleep rough in Winchester.**

Background

Since the last preventing homelessness strategy was published in 2014, the sector has been through both exciting and challenging times, to which the housing options service has responded in a positive and proactive way.

This was recognised nationally in 2017 when the service achieved the Government's Gold Standard award for its committed approach to preventing and tackling homelessness in the District. Winchester City Council was the first local authority in the County and only the 5th nationally to receive this award. This could not have been achieved without Corporate commitment, a proactive frontline triage service and robust partnership working.

Each local authority is required under the Homelessness Act 2002, to publish a homelessness strategy every 5 years. The new strategy comes at a pivotal time to build on the successes we have made to date to provide an enhanced housing options service which incorporates a holistic approach, achieving creative solutions to homelessness.

Our previous strategy was ambitious, with 3 overarching goals:

- To provide appropriate housing advice and support to all households facing homelessness irrespective of statutory need,
- Prevention of homelessness through effective partnership working and
- To develop services in line with the Gold Standard programme.

We achieved these goals and strived to develop the service even further which put us in a good position for the successful implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA 2017) which came into force on 3 April 2018. This was the most significant change in homelessness legislation for over 40 years. It brought new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness with 4 key measures:

- Extension of the definition of threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days
- A new duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness, regardless of priority need.
- A new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants regardless of priority need, and
- A new duty to refer for specified public services to notify the LA if they come in to contact with someone who they believe may be at risk of homelessness.

As a Local Authority we have welcomed this legislation and have worked with our partner agencies to ensure we reach those in need of support at the earliest possible stage. It encourages collaboration and partnership working to tackle homelessness. It is now more widely recognised that housing is not always the single solution and, services need to work together for the best possible outcomes for households. The Council will endeavor to not only work in partnership with agencies, but also expand on co-production opportunities so that those with lived experience are given a voice and place at the table to overcome local and national issues. There is no single reason why someone can end up without a home and we are committed to a person centered approach with support available no matter what the issue may be.

The overarching Council strategy has recognised the importance of housing to the district. One of its 4 aims is 'Delivering Quality Housing Options', ensuring commitment to driving down homelessness across the district and supporting partner agencies for an improved life for those in need.

The Council is committed to building new homes and has ambition to combat affordability issues by supporting households that are priced out of the house market. The emphasis is on cross tenure types and more security for households to prevent homelessness. With the Council's Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap being scrapped, further investment in housing will be achievable.

Building and resourcing more homes will not meet housing need alone. The development of more cohesive communities and ensuring that all residents have the opportunity to experience civic pride is important. All departments and services need to recognise, that for us to really understand the needs of those facing homelessness in the district we need to establish the root cause of an individual's situation, consider trauma and multiple needs that are not being addressed and provide strengths based approaches to improve their quality of life.

Overview

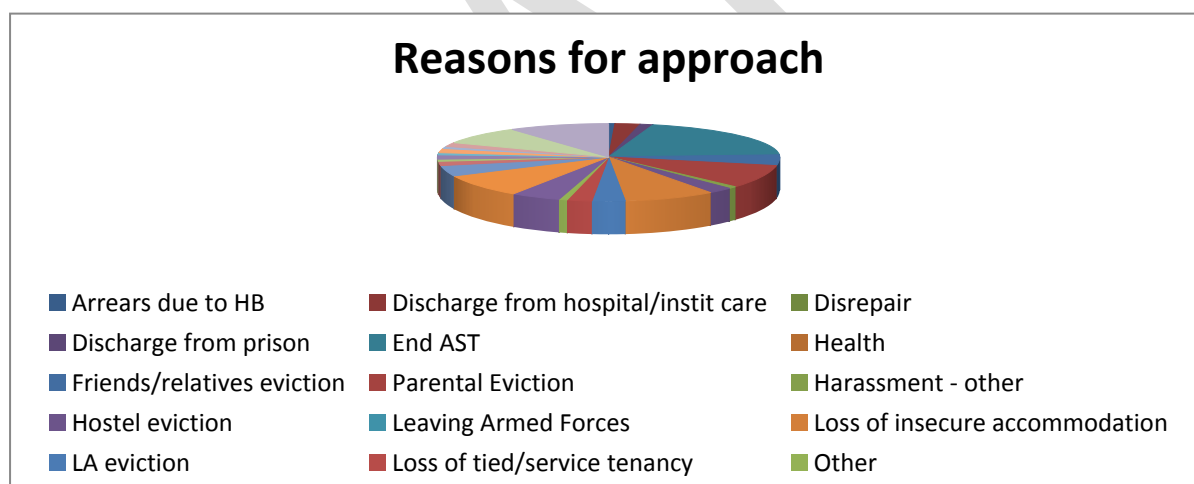
The Winchester District is home to 122,000 residents with an estimated 49,865 households. The District has a high quality housing market but high housing costs, average house prices in the Winchester District significantly exceed those in both the Central and South Hampshire market areas. The average home costs £402,000

compared to £333,230 in the rest of the County, and to buy a property you would need a household income of at least £60,000, 11 times the average income for a Winchester resident. Although wages have increased, this has not been at the same rate as house prices leading to a declining affordability of home ownership. This also impacts on the rental market and around 40% of residents do not have the means to rent a two bedroom property with the average monthly rent at £1,196. This provides a number of challenges to housing options in the District.

Approaches to the housing options services have remained consistent over the last 3 years with an average of 400 households seeking support to either prevent or relief homelessness per quarter. The main reasons for households approaching the Council being:

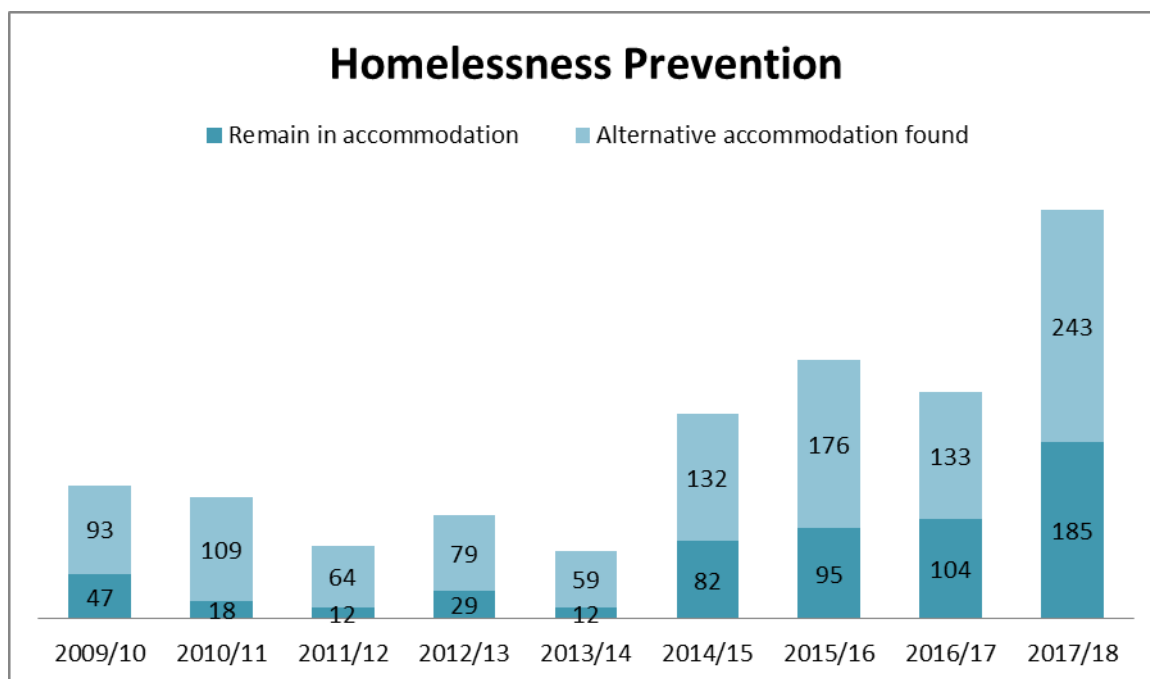
- termination of Assured Short hold Tenancy,
- Non violent breakdown of relationship and
- Parental eviction.

These 3 reasons equate to approximately 37% of all cases and are recognised nationally as the main causes of homelessness for several years. Although these reasons trigger homelessness the root causes of homelessness such as social, economic and personal reasons are not easy to measure.



The number of homelessness prevention activities undertaken by the service has increased, in 2014/15 there were 214 successful preventions compared to 428 in 2017/18. The most successful prevention outcomes tend to be households remaining in Private Rented Sector (PRS), an offer of social housing or assisting households in to the PRS with no landlord incentive.

The service has focused on supporting households to remain in their current accommodation and as such an increase in successful prevention work has been recorded. Assistance provided has been tenancy advice, negotiation and welfare advice. In 2017/18 185 households were supported in this way.



Court activity has decreased in the last 4 years both for landlord claims and mortgage claims. In 2014 the Court saw 169 possession claims from landlords of tenants in social and private rented accommodation; this has decreased to just 94 cases in 2017. Mortgage companies seeking possession from owner occupiers saw a much fewer number of 31 cases during 2014 reducing down to just 6 in 2017, evidencing that owner occupiers facing eviction is no longer an increasing concern.

Housing Need

Demand for social housing remains high, with 1278 households registered. Of these 352 are currently social housing tenants looking to transfer to an alternative sized property, 62 of these wanting to move to a smaller property. One bedroom accommodation remains in highest demand with approximately 802 households registered for this size accommodation.

Since 2015-16 there has been a decline in the number of applicants registered for social housing. A positive indicator that the Council and Registered Providers are committed to building homes, ensuring households are provided with stable, long term accommodation.

The average waiting times have also reduced. For someone determined to be Band 3 medium priority the average waiting time is 3 years 6 months. Although the number of lettings occurring per annum remains consistent (in comparison to nationally where it is recognised that Council's are seeing a decline) it is identified that social housing cannot be relied upon to resolve an immediate housing need. From 1st January 18- 31 December 18 there were 581 lettings, compared to 565 in the previous year.

The Housing Allocations team are adopting a customer centre approach, providing basic advice and support when interacting with customers. The Council are committed to having a good understanding of those registered for housing and identifying any support needs to ensure that timely advice and assistance is offered.

Rough Sleeping

The Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) published the Rough Sleeping Strategy in 2018. Its ambition is to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027. There are a range of commitments to help those rough sleeping or at risk of doing so, with a model focused on prevention, early intervention and a rapid rehousing approach to recovery.

There is recognition across the sector that the understanding of why people are rough sleeping and how services can support those is not perfect. Whilst it considers changes to data collection so that better statistical analysis can inform services going forward, it also recognises the human cost of rough sleeping, with 4,751 people sleeping rough on a typical night in 2017.. Those that sleep rough over a longer period of time are more likely to die young, with the average age of death for someone on the streets being 47 which is 30 years lower than the general population. Work needs to provide longer term protection from sleeping on the streets rather than brief intervention.

The strategy contains 61 commitments, a follow up delivery plan document was published in December 2018 which provided further information around the commitments and when they should be delivered. As part of the planning for this strategy we have considered the commitments set out in the Rough Sleeping Strategy to ensure those sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough receive the right services to support them.

The Council welcomed the strategy as it showed signs of a commitment to cross government departmental working to ensure more people are not only offered bricks and mortar but support to prevent homelessness from re-occurring. The Council is committed to reducing rough sleeping and street activity, with several partnerships in place to tackle the issues associated with it. However, system change is needed to be able to deliver appropriate services and further funding to resource these interventions. The Council will continue to apply for relevant funding streams and welcome doing so in partnership with other local authorities or local partners to show a commitment to collaborative working and pooling knowledge and expertise. We are keen to promote that the Council cannot resolve the issues of homelessness alone and value the services that support our pledge.

Rough sleeping in Winchester

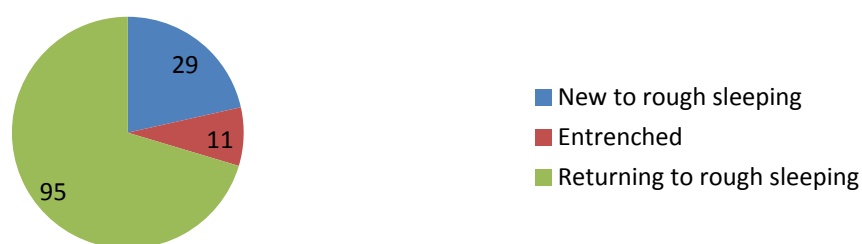
Outreach is carried out 5 days per week which gives a timely and accurate indication of those sleeping rough in our district on any one night. The number of rough sleepers found can vary between 0 and 8. On average around 5 rough sleepers have been found over the last 12 months.

Data suggests that in 2016-17 there were 98 incidents of rough sleeping. This figure demonstrates the number of incidents of rough sleeping observed and some individuals may have been counted a number of times within the year where they may have had periods of falling in to homelessness. To recognise the flaw in this style of data collection and to have a better understanding of the number of individuals

experiencing rough sleeping, data was subsequently recorded to identify the number of individuals rather than observations.

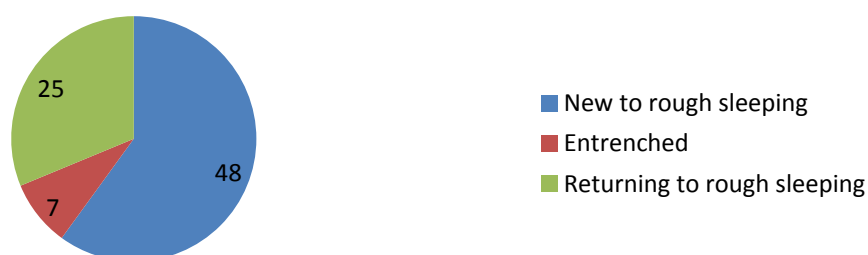
In 2017–18 this increased to 135, the majority of these rough sleepers have support needs around drug or alcohol use. Of those found,, 29 were deemed to be new to the streets, 11 entrenched and 95 were returning rough sleepers.

Rough sleeping activity 2017/18



In 2018-19 80 individuals were observed sleeping rough. Of them; 48 were new to rough sleeping, 7 were entrenched and unwilling for a prolonged period of time to explore housing options and 25 returned to rough sleeping after a period of accommodation. Comparing this data suggests that over the last few years the number of individuals being observed by the outreach team as rough sleeping has generally decreased. Over the last 12 months accommodation providers have adapted to working more flexibly in terms of admitting individuals in to accommodation and applying a person centered approach to supporting them to maintain their tenancy. What is now of concern is the percentage of those being identified as rough sleeping, being new to the streets. The Council and its partners need to understand the reason so many new individuals are facing homelessness and ensure that a rapid rehousing approach is adopted to support individuals and ensure support is accessible as early possible.

Rough sleeping activity 2018/19



Winchester districts annual rough sleeping figures

	No.	Count or estimate	Demographic	Percentage increase/decrease previous year
2014	14	Count		-
2015	5	Count		64% decrease
2016	4	Count		20% decrease
2017	9	Estimate	9 males	125% increase
2018	8	Count	8 males	11% decrease

Consultation & Review Process

This strategy has been developed in consultation with our statutory and voluntary partners, residents and service users. The consultation started in early 2018 when the Council commissioned an independent consultant to look at the current systems in place for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and provide a report on:

- The current situation in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping by canvassing views from agencies, meeting and individuals currently within the systems in place.
- Bring together understandings of the part they play using their strengths, values and assets.
- Identify what systems need reviewing
- Identify outcomes that individuals/organisations are seeking and
- Identify who has the potential and desire to champion, advocate and lead.

The report recognised the generosity that exists in Winchester, not just financial but time, insights, ideas and networks. The willingness to build relationships between agencies to work together, co-create and drive through systems change.

The views and priorities of our partners and those with lived experience are reflected in the identified priorities and accompanying action plan.

A consultation event was held in January 2019 with a multi agency workshop event. Those agencies invited to participate represented the services across the Winchester district that come in to contact with a variety of client groups. The outcomes and feedback from this event were then supplemented by follow-up questionnaires which were then sent out further afield to ensure we captured feedback from as many partners as possible.

Those living in temporary accommodation and clients of the day centre were also

consulted with. Their views are invaluable, having those with lived experience informing the strategy and action plan ensures we have a grass roots understanding of the systems that customers need to navigate.

The outcomes of the consultation event, questionnaires and consultants report were all compared to identify findings and recommendations.

Further details of the consultation event, workshop outcomes and questionnaire can be found in the Winchester City Council's Homelessness Review Report on the website.

Delivering the strategy and challenges

Welfare reform is having a significant impact on the viability of some households being able to remain in the private rented sector. Local Housing Allowance rates remaining static, the application of the Benefit cap and Universal Credit can also cause barriers to households securing and remaining in accommodation. Partnership working and communication across departments at both a local and national level is key to supporting households.

Universal Credit

Universal Credit (UC) has now been rolled out in all jobcentres across the UK which means any new claims for benefits will no longer use the old welfare system. It combines six different benefits in to one payment made monthly.

In the South of England 276,320 households were on Universal Credit as of February 2019. 255,168 in payment and 21,150 were not. 50% of claimants were single with no dependent children, 29% were single with dependent children, 10% couple with dependent children and 3% are couples with no dependent children.

As of 11th April 2019 there were 1148 households claiming UC via the Winchester Job Centre. There are 313 Council tenants currently claiming UC, 184 of these have an average rent arrear of £763. However, the other 129 claimants are either in credit or have a nil balance. Early identification of those due to move on to UC and who may need support maintaining their claim is vital to ensure low levels of rent arrears.

The Council has welcomed the news that the government will not extend the limit on Universal Credit received by families with two or more children if they were born before April 2017. Whilst there are several challenges for individuals and landlords to overcome with the implementation of Universal Credit, the purpose of one encompassing benefit is to help individuals reach their potential, making work pay and for those unable to work keeping them out of poverty. As the implementation of this welfare reform further embeds itself we are likely to see adjustments to the process of claiming UC and how claims are dealt with.

The Council established a Universal Credit project group in early 2018 to prepare for the roll out of UC across the district. This group was made up of senior and operational staff from revenues & benefits, tenancy services, housing options and the DWP. The focus of discussion was on how to promote the welfare changes and promoting the

support that was on offer. This project group continues to work together to mitigate risk to both individuals and landlords by empowering individuals to take responsibility for their UC claim and providing the tools to do so.

As part of the Council's in house support service there will be 2 money and benefit advisors to support households to maintain their tenancies by looking at benefit claims, maximising income and reducing expenditure. Tenancy support officers have helped 81 Council tenants in the last year to claim UC or resolve an issue with the claim. Whilst the Job Centre can help with some issues, the majority of their work is carried out in national call centres with minimal face to face contact.

Funding cuts

Hampshire County Council announced in 2018 a need to meet a funding shortfall of £140 million by April 2019, of which £56 million is planned to be met from the Adult Health and Care budget. Homelessness Support Services provided by the County are to be reduced by £1.8 million, the potential change to services as a consequence is a reduction in spend on lower level and move on supported housing and community support. This will mean that those with less critical support needs will need to seek help from alternative sources. These changes will take effect from 1st August 2019 through modifications to reduce the value of the contracts, with an extension further to 31st March 2021 agreed.

The Council have considered what provision will need to be in place to support those requiring community support in order to prevent homelessness. By pooling knowledge and expertise from across sectors (such as mental health, rough sleeping navigators, money advisors, older persons etc.) we aim to have specific rather than generic floating support offer. By bringing this service in house we can monitor the needs of the district and adapt services to meet changing demands.

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Although we have embraced the changes that have occurred as a result of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 we are not naïve to the fact that there are some challenges to the work we are trying to do. Some considerations to overcome are:

- A need for access to short term accommodation. If a referral is made to another authority there may be a duty to accommodate a household for a short period of time. To avoid the usage of B&B accommodation we will need to consider a supply and demand model of temporary accommodation to identify alternative options.
- Officer capacity, due to the length of time assessments and PHP reviews take. To tackle this we will need to monitor case loads closely and review staffing levels if required.
- An increase in footfall as there are changes to external support services.

Duty to Refer

The Homelessness Reduction Act placed responsibility on some public bodies to notify the housing authority of service users they consider may be homeless or

threatened with homelessness (as of 1st October 2018). The housing options service have engaged with not just the prescribed public bodies but also services that are identified as having contact with those at risk of homelessness. The Council welcome referrals from any agencies at the earliest opportunity to ensure that we can begin working with the household towards preventing or relieving their homelessness.

All Hampshire authorities have signed up to a joint Hampshire Homelessness Referral protocol. This sets out how the local authorities and public bodies operating in Hampshire will deal with referrals. By have a pan Hampshire referral form it is easier for agencies to navigate pathways into services.

The Housing Options Team will continue to monitor referrals received to ensure they are appropriate and timely. Identifying those services not using this resource will be important to initiate contact and overcome any barriers to a productive pathway into the service.

Rough sleeping

There is an identified trend in rough sleepers and those who fall in and out of homelessness having experienced complex trauma. As a result of this it can be difficult to adhere to rules attached to accommodation. The current supported housing provisions do not resolve all single homeless households' needs. Barriers to accessing accommodation can create strains in relationships between professionals and individuals. Developing different offers of accommodation and support is required to achieve our ambitious pledge that 'no one should need to sleep rough in Winchester by 2023'.

The Winchester Social Inclusion Group (SIG) has a wide range of engaged partners keen to contribute to a systems change approach. It exists to reduce rough sleeping and tackle associated issues of street attachment and harmful street activity by 2020. The group have developed a pledge and 3 commitments which mirror the MHCLG's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 vision:

- Delivering individual, collaborative and whole system change through early intervention, preventative and recovery-focused services to alleviate and prevent rough sleeping. (This aligns to the prevention and recovery elements of the Strategy)
- Ensuring optimal and effective deployment of resources, assets and skills (This aligns to the intervention element)
- Promoting and achieving safe and thriving civic space usage for all by reducing ASB, Crime and vulnerability, raise public awareness and increase safeguarding (This aligns to prevention, intervention and recovery).

To achieve these commitments the Housing Options Service along with the Community Safety team need to drive the pledge and ensure partners can see the importance of the work that needs to be undertaken.

As a result of the passion and commitment shown at the SIG meetings, separate working groups have been established to look at some of the identified blockages and barriers to individuals engaging with services. The working groups will identify areas

for changing the system and joint funding opportunities.

MEAM (Making Every Adult Matter)

As a partnership the Winchester district has been recognised as a MEAM approach area. The SIG will be modelling and facilitating efforts to address and resolve system barriers. The types of issues that may be considered and addressed are:

- Tackling blocks and behaviours in the system preventing workers from being effective in the services provided to individuals.
- Reviewing service delivery and access to ensure clients get the right support at the right time from the right part of the system.
- How information can be shared.

One key change that needs to be addressed is collaboration, as this is the best way to tackle multiple disadvantages. Engaging with those with lived experience provides grassroots insights, to develop a shared understanding of the problems with the current system and a clear vision of change.

Affordability & Housing supply

Affordability of housing is a challenge which means a limited degree of choice in respect of housing options. With average household incomes in Winchester falling considerably short of the minimum income required for both purchasing and renting on the open market more households are finding themselves living in unsuitable accommodation. The consultation questionnaire sent to partners highlighted 'Affordable housing must be affordable' as the highest action priority. It is not just rent payments which lead households to struggle financially; fuel poverty is a concern for many households. Our private sector housing team are committed to working with ECO fund providers to identify those in privately owned or rented accommodation who would benefit from free energy efficiency measures.

We will continue to promote our City Lets scheme to increase the number of properties we can offer to households at the Local Housing Allowance rate. UC and the benefit cap can prove challenging when trying to persuade a landlord to rent their property to someone in housing need. To combat this we need to ensure we can provide the right support to our tenants and work closely with the DWP. By combining our in house City lets officer and Empty homes officer post we hope that more owners will be encouraged to bring properties back in to use.

Winchester City Council and Test Valley Borough Council have recently been successful in bidding for a share of the Private Rented Access Fund awarded by the MHCLG. This money will be used to recruit a tenant liaison officer and landlord liaison officer. It is anticipated that will provide extra reassurance to landlords of the capacity of officers to support the maintenance of tenancies. It will also be used to provide tenancy ready training to those in Temporary Accommodation to prepare them for managing a tenancy in the private rented sector.

The creation of a housing company or other specialist vehicle will also support the development of affordable and private rented homes in the district.

Lack of move on accommodation from current supported housing provision can create blockages within services. By working with partner agencies we need to consider pooling resources (funding, support staff and buildings) to develop additional accommodation. There have already been successes with this approach in the district but further work is required.

To meet the aims and objectives of the strategy the Council will need support from stakeholders and partnership initiatives such as SIG, MEAM partners, Winchester Community Safety Partnership, Hampshire County Councils social inclusion, mental health and domestic abuse provisions, housing providers and the voluntary sector. Winchester City Council acknowledges that we cannot work in isolation and collaborative working is vital.

Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping strategy priorities and outcomes

1. To provide early intervention and support to prevent homelessness across the district

Providing the earliest opportunities to prevent and relieve homelessness through our frontline housing options triage service which is available to all customers.

- Developing a holistic person centered approach to all housing options assessments.
- Enabling access to the service through home visits, accessible offices, assertive outreach team and drop in surgeries.
- Promote and develop lead officers for specified groups such as victims of domestic abuse, care leavers, former members of the armed forces, people suffering mental illness and those with complex needs, people released from prison and those leaving hospital with no housing in place.
- Promote early intervention in schools, family projects, care-leaving teams to ensure individuals can develop the skills and resilience to navigate the risk of homelessness.
- Monitor trends and identify any other groups who may be at particular risk of homelessness in the district.
- Review the outreach provision to ensure support is targeted to meet the needs of those sleeping out for the first time, those returning to the streets and for single women rough sleeping. Considering options for navigators to have the freedom to try different forms of innovative interventions to achieve outcomes, with the full engagement and partnership of local agencies.

- To ensure we are aware of and bid for any relevant funding made available by the MHCLG to support the work outlined in the Rough sleeping strategy to bring new and innovative approaches to providing early intervention and support to those at risk of homelessness.
- Introducing and developing an in house floating support service across all tenures.
- Empowering opportunities for members of the public and the business community to support those at risk of rough sleeping by increasing promotion of the StreetLink service.
- Working with partners and the voluntary sector to support the implementation of the duty to refer to enable further early intervention opportunities to ensure no one in Winchester needs to sleep rough.
- Ensure the pathways with registered social landlords are clear and promoting early intervention and support. We must ensure there are formal systems to monitor and understand failed tenancies.

2. Promoting systems change through partnership arrangements

Promoting district wide systems change through the Social Inclusion Group (SIG), a senior cross sector collaborative partnership. Co-operation between internal departments, statutory bodies, voluntary sector agencies, and faith and community groups is vital to drive through change.

- Delivering on individual, collaborative and whole-system change through early intervention, preventative and recovery-focused services to alleviate and prevent rough sleeping.
- Establishing Winchester District as a Make Every Adult Matter (MEAM) approach area, to design and deliver better coordinated services as a partnership.
- Improve access to support for good mental health and physical health, reducing crisis interventions where possible. Participation in the Hampshire wide Keep Well Collaborative will complement this and support a Homeless Health Assessment to consider how early homelessness prevention results in better outcomes for individuals and significant financial savings for health and other budgets.
- Review and address areas of service duplication which do not serve to reduce rough sleeping or tackle street attachment.
- Ensuring optimal and effective deployment of resources, assets and skills (right people, right place, and right time).

- Promoting and achieving safe and thriving civic space usage for all (reduce ASB, Crime and Vulnerability, raise public awareness, and increase safeguarding).
- To engage with Expert Link to coordinate a local network group containing professionals and those with lived experience to identify local priorities and find sustainable solutions, developing co-created systems and services in partnership.
- Regularly reviewing the pathways in place to ensure that they are relevant and fit for purpose. Considering new styles of accommodation to meet needs in a rapid rehousing approach.
- Ensuring that all agencies have an understanding of and adhere to the provisions of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 particularly in respect of the Duty to Refer for specified public bodies.
- Share best practice and positive outcomes as well as training opportunities to upskills staff across the partnership.

3. Ensuring sufficient supply of accommodation

Explore and take opportunities with partners for joint commissioning and resources ensuring that the housing options offer contains a variety of housing types.

- Apply a rapid re-housing response to rough sleeping through a renewed assertive outreach provision and a Housing First led model of provision. This will consider the suitability of accommodation for those with multiple needs and take a flexible approach to tenancy conditions to meet the needs of the individual.
- Complete a review of dormant assets to see if there are estate owned properties which could be brought back into use.
- Consider the viability of a housing company to drive forward the development of mixed tenure accommodation in the district.
- Ensure resources are available to expand the City lets scheme, improving the offer for landlords and outcomes for those at risk of homelessness.
- Introduce a Landlords Forum to overcome barriers for landlords letting properties to those identified by the Housing Options service.
- Work with developers and Registered Social Landlords to increase suitable housing supply.

- We will continue to make best use of the available social housing stock working in partnership with our tenancy service team.
- Work with our Private Sector Housing team to bring empty properties back into use.
- Work in collaboration with partner agencies to ensure those leaving hostels are tenancy ready and can successfully maintain accommodation once they have moved on.
- Working with the New Homes team to inform new developments to ensure we are meeting the needs of the community and those registered for housing with us.
- Co-commissioning Homelessness Support Services in partnership with Hampshire County Council.

4. Provide the right support and services so that no person needs to sleep rough in Winchester

Provide services which are led by an individual's strengths and needs to promote positive engagement and outcomes for those without accommodation. It is vital that individuals and households are provided with the right support to ensure they sustain any future accommodation. The introduction of Personalised Housing Plans with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 will identify short and long term support needs and goals.

- Become a MEAM approach area bringing together good will, passion and business objectives of services to identify clear joint aims and a framework to support this.
- Make services and responses to rough sleeping and street attachment 'trauma informed' and ensure that staff are fully trained and supported to do this.
- Consider the introduction of 'navigators' to Winchester to support rough sleepers from their first contact with services through to settled accommodation. They will focus not just on finding a housing solution but supporting the individual with their recovery to avoid returning to the streets. This will require freedom to try different forms of innovative interventions to achieve outcomes, with the full engagement and partnership of local agencies
- Co-ordinate information which show early indicators of risk of homelessness and work together to sustain accommodation, build connections and well being.

- Create opportunities for work-placements and volunteering for people who have been rough sleeping and/or with street attachment.
- Partners in Winchester to engage with Expert Link to implement a co-production network group. This will involve peer work and encourage discussions aimed to identify barriers to individuals engaging with services.
- An audit of current support services will be undertaken to ensure that there is clear access to support for specific client groups such as; mental health, benefits and money advice, older persons etc. This will ensure that advice and support is tailored to consider specific needs.
- Continue to promote the alternative giving scheme in place in Winchester. Ensuring that the public (including students and tourists) are informed of the services available to those sleeping rough across the district.

Links to other Strategies and related policies

This Strategy should be considered in the context of a range of other housing strategies and policies.



WCC Council Strategy 2017-2020

The Strategy cannot single handedly tackle housing issues. Providing advice and support to a household is just one step in not only ensuring all have the opportunity to have somewhere to call home and feel civic pride.

One of the Council Strategies priorities is to ‘Deliver quality housing options’. It recognises that housing can be expensive in the District and that there is a

commitment to provide different options for residents. The Council aim to achieve this by:

- Responding to the need to provide more affordable housing in the district.
- Drive down homelessness across the District and support agencies in the drive for an improved life for those in need.
- Provide good access to affordable housing options across a range of tenures.
- Be proactive in tenant engagement, achieving effective representation and insight across all tenant and customer groups.

Housing Strategy 2017/18- 2022/23

The Winchester District Housing Strategies primary focus is those who are unable to exercise a reasonable degree of choice about their housing circumstances.

Priorities are:

- To accelerate and to maximize the supply of high quality, affordable housing across the district.
- improve the housing circumstances of vulnerable and excluded households.
- Supporting local people accessing high quality and affordable housing which meet their needs.
- To make best use of housing.
- To engage with residents and create cohesive communities.

Tenancy Strategy

The Council's Tenancy Strategy sets out the high level strategic objectives to determine how tenancies are used and managed across the local district. The Strategy ensures that all social housing properties advertised through the Council's choice based lettings scheme supports the creation of balanced, settled and cohesive communities.

Allocations Policy

The Council operate a choice based lettings scheme to register applicants for housing, allowing customers to bid or register their interest in suitable social rented housing.

The Council is committed to a Scheme of Allocation that offers greater choice to all those seeking housing and enables customers to make well-informed decision about their housing options.

The key principles and objectives of the Scheme which determines how allocations will be made are:

- To meet our homeless prevention and statutory homelessness duties

- To give 'reasonable preference' to those in greatest housing need
- To meet the needs of vulnerable people with support
- To provide applicants with as much choice as possible
- To help to create and maintain sustainable local communities
- To make the best use of available housing resources
- To allocate scarce local housing resources in as fair a way as possible

Private Rented Sector Offer Policy

The introduction of the Localism Act 2011 provided the opportunity for the Council to discharge its full homelessness duty to applicants by making an offer of suitable privately rented accommodation. This provides the opportunity to avoid the use of temporary accommodation, or for those households already housed temporarily by the Council for the length of time to be limited.

Empty Property Strategy

The overarching aim of the strategy is to help return long term private sector empty homes to occupation. An empty property can have an impact on its surroundings if left in poor condition. Bringing a property back in to use can tackle social, economic and public health issues, and increase the amount of decent homes in the District in turn helping reduce homelessness and lessen the requirement for temporary accommodation.

Resources

The MHCLG provide the Council with the Homelessness Prevent Grant and Flexible Homelessness Support Grant which are both calculated annually. To support with the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) a New Burdens Fund was granted for a period of 3 years. The value of these grants are not guaranteed and is therefore considered for short term projects and staff to provide a long lasting effect on the preventing homelessness agenda.

The Council's temporary accommodation stock sits within the HRA. Generally the expenditure associated with this provision does not exceed the incoming finance from rents received.

Our partners also provide services for homeless people and those at risk of homelessness. This is provided by additional resources and funding outside of the grants highlighted above.

Part of the work undertaken by the Social Inclusion group is to identify funding opportunities for partners and the Local Authority to support the action plan attached to this strategy. Match funding opportunities also need to be considered to achieve new ways of funding and delivering targeted housing options and homelessness services.

Monitoring and Review

This strategy is for a five year term but will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant and current and can respond to any sector changes. If any significant sector changes occur the strategy will be reviewed to ensure the objectives remain relevant.

This Strategy is a working document and will be monitored, owned and led on by District partners across individual specialist areas, with the council taking overall responsibility for any amendments or updates. The Council will consult on the effectiveness of our District-wide homelessness prevention measures through a number of means, including various forums in place in the district. The Council will ensure the annual service plan for the housing options/private rented sector teams align themselves to the more detailed actions requires as a direct result of the consultation and review undertaken.

Publication

A copy of this strategy is available on the Council's website and is available upon request as a hard copy at the Council's offices. Any request for versions in Large Print and Braille can be made in writing to:

Housing Options Manager
Housing Services
Winchester City Council
City Offices
Colebrook Street
Winchester
SO23 9LJ
Email: homelessness@winchester.gov.uk
Website: www.winchester.gov.uk

DRAFT