

Sevenoaks District Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2023-2028

Introduction

The demand for homelessness services has increased steadily over the past 5 years. During the past 3 years, the Council's Housing Service received more than 2,526 requests for advice and assistance from family and single households seeking help. The impact of homelessness has a devastating impact on those directly affected, a social cost that extends into the wider community, and a financial cost that draws agency resources away from other key services.

Although Sevenoaks District within the national context has seen a rise in levels of homelessness, it remains in a position of not having a rough sleeping problem. However, the Council cannot be complacent, homelessness effects lives and life chances and 1 rough sleeper must be considered 1 too many.

This Strategy introduces a framework that sets out to reduce the impact that homelessness has on local individuals and households, and the priorities the Council will pursue to help do so.

What is homelessness?

This Strategy uses a definition of homelessness that includes both rough sleepers, single people and families that are threatened with, or present as homeless. In short, any household (individual, couple, or a family) that find themselves without a safe or secure place to call home.

Those who present as homeless do not have to be sleeping on the streets or lack a roof at the time they ask for help. Households can be considered homeless if they are:

- Having to stay with friends or family.
- Staying in a hostel, night shelter or bed and breakfast accommodation.
- At risk of violence or abuse in their current home.
- Living in poor or unsafe conditions.
- Leaving an institution such as a prison or hospital, or the care system, with nowhere to go.

Contributing factors that have led to this national picture of increasing homelessness include:

- High housing demand and a lack of supply leading to high house prices and private rents with greater shortfalls between rents and Local Housing Allowance
- Shortage of social housing or truly affordable housing to rent

- Increasing household bills and cost of living
- Cuts and reforms to welfare benefits
- Cuts in funding to statutory and voluntary services which support vulnerable people
- Buy to Let tax rules impacted the private rented market
- Impact of COVID pandemic

How has this Strategy been developed?

The relevant legislation has been adhered to in formulating and modifying this Strategy. It has been prepared in line with the statutory requirements set out in the Homelessness Act 2002, Section 1(4) of which requires housing authorities to publish a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy, based on the results of a Homelessness Review, which we have undertaken as part of the Housing Strategy 2022-2027 refresh.

In addition we have had regard to the Council's Allocation Policy and the Homelessness Code of Guidance for local housing authorities in England 2018, (updated 12th October 2021).

The homelessness review, undertaken earlier this year as part of the Housing Strategy refresh, provided an up to date picture of:

- Current and likely future levels of homelessness across Sevenoaks District
- Activities carried out and support available to prevent homelessness and those experiencing it.
- Level of resources made available locally to tackle homelessness.

The wider public, local voluntary and statutory partners were invited to comment on the findings of the review, and their responses have been used to inform the shape and direction of this Strategy, which sets out how the Council will work with others to; put in place plans to prevent homelessness occurring; intervene effectively when it occurs; and deliver sustainable plans to support re-housing options.

National context

The operating environment in which local authorities must deliver services to reduce homelessness continues to provide a number of key challenges. Increasing house prices, rising private rented sector rents and the reduced income many local households have experienced as a result of the pandemic, continue to have an impact, sustaining the high number of households accessing services and needing to be placed in temporary accommodation.

Key issues to highlight include:

COVID: over the past 2 years the pandemic has, not unsurprisingly, had a significant impact on central Government Strategy. At a local level, this has resulted in teams refocusing services by; providing emergency accommodation to rough sleepers as

part of the Everyone In initiative; putting in place additional safeguards to help maintain social distancing in temporary accommodation; and delivering remote services as standard. A ban on private rented sector evictions, in place since the first national lockdown, expired at the end of May 2021. Along with the broader economic impacts of the pandemic, this has increased the level of demand on homelessness services and the potential impacts will need to be monitored in the months ahead.

Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017: the implementation of this Act, whilst putting in place welcome additional protections for those at risk of homelessness, has introduced extra demands on the work of local Housing Needs teams. The changes it introduced included:

- A new prevention duty, requiring local authorities to take reasonable steps to assist those likely to become homeless earlier, so within 56, rather than 28 days.
- A new relief duty, which applies to those already homeless when they ask the local authority for help. It requires local authorities to provide support for 56 days.
- A requirement to carry out a holistic assessment of the applicant's housing and support needs, then set out how these will be addressed in a Personal Housing Plan.

The combined impact of these changes has been to increase the overall number of applicants seeking help, alter the profile of those qualifying for assistance (in particular more single applicants and more households with complex needs are coming forward under the new duties) and increase the number of applicants placed in temporary accommodation.

Domestic Abuse Act 2021: Under this new Act, domestic abuse is recognised as a direct factor conferring priority need for the first time, so applicants no longer have to prove that the abuse is creating vulnerability, in order to qualify for help. This is a welcome change that will provide re-assurance and certainty for individuals and their families presenting as homeless because of domestic abuse and will simplify the decision making process for officers. The Act introduces a new definition of domestic abuse and requires that housing authorities, when rehousing victims, should provide a secure lifetime tenancy.

National Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018: this Government Strategy sets out their current plans for tackling rough sleeping. It comprises of three parts:

- **Prevention:** understanding issues that lead to rough sleeping and providing support.
- **Intervention:** helping rough sleepers with swift support tailored to their individual needs.
- **Recovery:** supporting people in finding a new home and rebuilding their lives.

The Strategy, along with the funding received via the Rough Sleeper Initiative, set out to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and eradicate it completely by 2027.

Local context

Property prices in Sevenoaks District are high, with the average median cost of a home in 2020 is £425,000 (source: Targeted Review of Local Housing Needs 2022 (TRLHN)). The recent surge in market activity has only served to exacerbate this position. Such high prices set the context for a range of issues that restrict the access that many households have to local housing markets. These include (with all references relating to the TRLHN):

- **High house prices and rents:** house price ratios, which compare the relationship between average property prices and average earnings, showed that by 2020, median property prices were almost 12 times the local resident based full time salary. High house prices have a knock on effect on private rents, the high level of which continue to challenge the ability for local households to secure suitable housing. By 2020, the median rent (all bed sizes) stood at £1,296 per month, a rise of 40 percent over the past 10 years. A recent search on Rightmove (18 October 2022) illustrated the fact that the majority of private rents charged in Sevenoaks District are above the Local Housing Allowance, which caps levels of welfare benefit subsidy that can be claimed. Of the 39 advertised homes in Sevenoaks and Swanley, none were available at a rent below the respective Local Housing Allowance rate. With Local Housing Allowance rates remaining frozen, this picture is unlikely to change anytime soon.
- **Deprivation:** Indices of Multiple Deprivation, last published by the Office for National Statistics in 2019, provide a snapshot of relative deprivation in each locality in England, by looking at a range of factors including income, employment, education, health, and barriers to housing. These are combined into a single index. Overall, Sevenoaks District ranks as 295 out of 354 local authorities in England. Sevenoaks District has two Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) that are amongst the 20% most deprived in England, St Mary's and White Oak wards in Swanley.
- **Housing tenure and supply:** The total housing stock of Sevenoaks District was 50,947 in 2020, an increase of 2,886 homes, a rise of 6% over the past ten years (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities – live tables). This was driven largely by new private sector provision (increase of 2,836 homes) and a smaller increase in Registered Providers (formerly known as Housing Associations) homes (62 homes). Overall, the growth in Registered Provider social housing stock has been small, once Right to Buy losses are taken into account. New affordable housing supply is an area that requires more focus if provision is to be expanded to help meet demand.
- **Housing demand and availability:** The demand for social housing is high and there are currently over 870 households waiting for homes on the Council's

housing register, each of whom meets one or more categories of preferential need. The availability of social housing, on the other hand, is restricted in terms of both new supply and the number of existing homes that become available to relet. During 2021-2022 a total of 194 West Kent Housing Association homes were let to new tenants, which represents a stock turnover of 3.5%. There remains a significant discrepancy between the levels of supply and demand.

The combined impact of high housing costs and restricted affordable housing in both the private and social rented housing sectors, presents a real housing challenge to residents of the District. These challenges restrict the housing choices of many households on middle incomes and severely restrict the choices of those on low and unstable incomes, many of whom have to compromise on the standard and suitability of the homes they can secure. These inequalities will continue to have a disproportionate impact on young people, single households, and those reliant on welfare benefits.

Strategic fit

This Strategy contributes directly to the housing ambitions set out in Sevenoaks District Council's Council Plan and our refreshed Housing Strategy 2022-2027 priorities, which are:

- Priority 1: Developing Sevenoaks' housing offer: building new affordable homes.
- Priority 2: Promoting quality and optimising the suitability of homes.
- Priority 3: Reducing homelessness and improving routes into permanent accommodation.
- Priority 4: Healthy people, homes and places.

In addressing homelessness the plan sets out goals to; focus on prevention; support households at risk of homelessness; and work in partnership to address the number of rough sleepers in the town.

Summary of findings from the Homelessness Review

The review set out to provide an up to date picture of the:

- Current and likely future levels of homelessness across the District.
- Activities carried out and support available to prevent homelessness and those experiencing it.
- Level of resources made available locally to tackle homelessness.

The main causes of homelessness in the District remains static:

- Parents, other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate.
- Loss of rented or tied accommodation due to termination of assured shorthold tenancy.

- Violent breakdown of relationship involving partner.
- Other reason (eg homeless in emergency, sleeping rough or in hostel returned from abroad).
- Non-violent breakdown of relationship.
- Loss of rented or tied accommodation other than termination of assured shorthold tenancy.

A summary of key findings from the review is set out below.

- **Service demand and operational response:** the review showed that the demand for services remains high and is likely to remain so into the foreseeable future. During 2021-2022, 999 households raised enquiries with the housing needs team, a decrease from 1,180 enquiries received the year before. 376 of these enquiries progressed through to a formal homelessness application, and of these, 205 households were found to be owed a prevention duty (because they were at risk of homelessness when they approached the Council) or relief duty (because they were homeless at the time they approached the Council).
- **Prevention duty and the Council's response:** the number of households whose prevention duty ended during the year is used to measure the level of activity under this duty. During 2021-2022 this duty ended for 205 households, with the preventative activities undertaken by the Housing Service successfully securing accommodation for 130 of those seeking help. Around 36 went on to become homeless. Taking positive action to prevent homelessness in this way reduces both the social cost of homelessness on households and the financial costs borne by the Council.
- **Relief duty and the Council's response:** the number of households whose relief duty ended during the year is used to measure the level of activity under this duty. During 2021-2022 this duty ended for 171 households, with the activities undertaken by the Housing Service successfully securing accommodation and addressing homelessness for 38 of those seeking help. As is the case with preventative measures, relieving homelessness in this way reduces the social and financial costs of homelessness. Around 130 of households remained homeless as their relief duty ended (after 56 days) and progressed to be assessed under the main homelessness duty.
- **Main duty assessments:** the number of main duty assessments undertaken has risen by 48% over the past few years, from 62 cases in 2018-2019 to 130 in 2021-2022. The Council has assisted many households earlier in the process under the prevention and relief duties as introduced in the Homelessness Reduction Act. However the Council has seen an increase in the number of approaches from households impacted by COVID, an increase in domestic abuse presentations and single households and those aged 16 and 17 year old. Single households are less likely to qualify as a priority than families, as having children is the key driver of priority need set out in the legislation. In 2021-2022 most households re-housed under the main duty accepted an offer of a

socially rented home with the remainder accepting an offer in the private rented sector.

- **Rough Sleeping:** the number of rough sleepers in Sevenoaks District continues to be low when compared with areas of a similar size. The annual rough sleeper count, which takes place in all local authorities each autumn, recorded 1 case in 2021, a reduction from 8 in 2020. The Rough Sleeping Initiative continues to provide ongoing support, carrying out proactive outreach work that identifies those sleeping rough and helps connect them with local services, but there remains a significant shortage of suitable move on accommodation in the District. This has been exasperated by the Government's Everyone In COVID plans, which provided much needed shelter for those at risk of rough sleeping, but has left high numbers of single, often vulnerable persons, in emergency accommodation. Addressing their support and housing needs is a priority.
- **Partnerships:** working with statutory and voluntary partners has been integral to mounting an effective local response to homelessness, and a wide range of dedicated partners have joined efforts to help prevent homelessness and provide support to vulnerable households. The new Duty to Refer pathway, introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act is working well, with partner agencies referring 1,687 enquiries to the Council between 2018-2022. The probation service, hospitals and prisons were the leading sources of referral.
- **Local trends and COVID:** over the past year, analysis of how the Housing Service has been operating indicates that the pandemic has had a local impact that reflects national trends. As such, the associated policies that have sought to restrict evictions and support the most vulnerable, have increased the proportion of single households, and reduced the number of households with children being assisted by the housing services team.
- **Impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act:** there is evidence that the shift towards assisting more single households was underway before the pandemic, as a result of the new prevention and relief duties introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act. In 2021-2022 single persons accounted for 201 of all those qualifying for assistance under the prevention or relief duties. Invariably, this means that the service is managing higher numbers of single and vulnerable people with mental health issues and other complex disadvantages.
- **Impact of the Domestic Abuse Act:** the new act was introduced in 2021 and placed a duty on local authorities to give support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and safe accommodation. Since its introduction, the Council has seen a rise in out of area placements, notably from London authorities. Domestic abuse now accounts for a significant number of our homelessness enquires and has seen 136 placements being made in temporary and emergency accommodation in 2021-2022.

- Longer term trends:** Whilst in the short term there is likely to be some re-balancing of the profile of those accessing the service, as the impact of COVID cases, services are likely to continue to face a high level of demand from a more marginalised demand through preventative activity. In addressing these trends, the emphasis will need to be placed on putting in place high quality services that seek to reduce homelessness. Locally, we are seeing the rising cost of living impacting a rise in homelessness. The proposed removal of the Kent Homeless Connect support contract by Kent County Council will impact the provision of much needed supported accommodation and intensive support for rough sleepers with multi-complex needs and challenging customer base.

Strategic Objectives

The objectives of the Strategy will cover the following themes:

<p>PREVENTION</p>	<p>Quality housing needs and standards - services dedicated to effective advice, holistic and informed assessment.</p> <p>Preventative casework - working alongside partners, to stop those seeking help from becoming homeless.</p> <p>Targeted preventions for the most vulnerable groups through the provision of agreed pathways into support.</p> <p>Strategic activities that seek to identify issues that drive homelessness across the District and apply remedies to reduce it.</p>
<p>INTERVENTION</p>	<p>Tackling rough sleeping - continue supporting the County wide approach to reducing harm and addressing associated multiple, complex needs.</p> <p>Partnership working - maximise the effectiveness of joint working and pathways for at risk groups.</p> <p>Temporary housing - provide a good quality, safe, secure, value for money accommodation portfolio and reduce the use of emergency placements.</p>
<p>SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS</p>	<p>Re-housing establish a range of sustainable housing and move-on</p>

	<p>options for rough sleepers, vulnerable and homeless households.</p> <p>Support - deliver effective support services to help households maintain accommodation once housed.</p>
--	---

Each of these themes is underpinned by a series of objectives:

- Effective collaborations with statutory, agency and voluntary partners.
- High quality services that treat customers with respect and provide value for money.
- Skilled and well trained staff.

Pursuing an integrated approach that works with partners to assess and prevent the local causes of homelessness and rough sleeping, can help deliver best practice, reduce the barriers that restrict people from accessing services, and equip residents with the skills they need to sustain their tenancy in the longer term.

Monitoring

The Action Plan will be monitored on an annual basis to maintain progress against the set objectives.

If any minor changes are needed, these will be considered by the Head of Housing to ensure that the Strategy may be future proofed to changing legislation, circumstance and local identified needs.

Authority to introduce the minor amendments is delegated to the Chief Officer, People and Places, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health.

Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy: Action Plan 2023-2028

Theme 1: Prevention					
Objective	Action	Success Criteria and Outcomes	When	Lead Officer/Team Responsible	Progress
Quality housing advice, prevention and accommodation services - dedicated to effective advice, holistic and informed case assessment	Train and develop a team of confident and experienced housing advice, prevention and accommodation officers to deliver high quality needs assessments and excellent customer service, with dignity and respect	Develop and update skills matrix for all teams/staff	Year 1 and ongoing	Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader	
		Organise delivery of homelessness law and case law update courses	Annually	Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader <i>Partners:</i> <i>Porchlight</i> <i>CAB</i>	
		Named staff champions with joint responsibility for leading specialist training/liaison in areas, such as domestic abuse, ex-offenders and mental health awareness	Year 1	Housing Advice Team Leader	
		Enhanced monthly	Ongoing	Homelessness	

		monitoring of complaints and ensure outcomes are discussed at 1-1s to reduce levels of complaints		Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader	
	Develop IT systems to maximise efficiency, case management and reporting capabilities and align key customer processes	Effective case management of homelessness applications and decisions in place	Year 1 and ongoing	Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader/ Accommodation Team Leader	
		Updated website content, with better quality information providing residents with opportunities to receive answers via self-service options	Ongoing	Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader/ Accommodation Team Leader	
		Automated management reports detailing caseload, approaches, throughput, and demographics, to support the more effective monitoring of service	Ongoing	Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader/ Accommodation Team Leader	

		<p>Data reports that can be extracted and shared with partners to support the development of new initiatives and funding bids</p> <p>Key customer processes, including applications for homelessness, housing register and change of circumstance forms, fully operational and online</p> <p>Automated processes in place that reduce the time spent on administrative tasks and improve customer outcomes</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Year 1</p> <p>Year 1</p>	<p>Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader/ Accommodation Team Leader</p> <p>Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader/ Accommodation Team Leader</p> <p>Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader/ Accommodation Team Leader</p>	
	<p>Work closely with statutory and voluntary sector partners, ensuring customers can access advice and</p>	<p>Hold regular forum with voluntary homelessness service providers, advice, and statutory agencies</p>	<p>Year 1 and ongoing</p>	<p>Head of Housing/ Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader/ Accommodation Team Leader</p>	

	practical support which meets their needs and delivers realistic housing solutions	<p>At least one partner agency invited to each monthly team meeting to discuss their service/project</p> <p>Monitor referral arrangements in place to deliver preventative outcomes via commissioned partners</p>	<p>Year 1 and ongoing</p> <p>Year 1 and ongoing</p>	<p><i>Partners:</i> Porchlight West Kent Housing Association CAB</p> <p>Head of Housing/ Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader</p>	
Preventative casework – working, alongside partners, to stop those seeking help from becoming homeless	Work effectively with other colleagues in the Council such as housing benefit, private housing, community safety, licensing, and income teams, to help resolve issues that may lead to homelessness	Improved standards in private sector accommodation resulting in fewer approaches due to disrepair	Ongoing	<p>Head of Housing/ Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader</p> <p><i>Partners:</i> West Kent Housing Association</p>	
	Work with neighbouring authorities and	Increased volume of timely referrals from agencies and support	Ongoing	Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team	

	named public bodies to review and maintain effective Duty to Refer pathways, to help drive the early identification of homelessness	services, improving prevention outcomes for applicants		Leader	
	Create a dedicated hub of local partners, integrating the prevention work of Council teams, voluntary and statutory agencies, to focus on upstreaming preventative activities and coordinate casework	Hub established as the focus of preventative work and the lead in deploying early interventions targeted to those at risk of losing their home Increased volumes of planned moves to alternative Private Rented Sector homes and other housing options through negotiation and the use of incentives	Year 1 and ongoing Ongoing	Head of Housing/ Homelessness Prevention Manager <i>Partners:</i> <i>Porchlight</i> <i>West Kent Housing Association</i> <i>CAB</i> Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Accommodation Team Leader	
	Target early financial support for tenants (Discretionary	Reduced proportion of relief versus prevention outcomes managed through the	Ongoing	Housing Advice Team Leader/ HERO Team Leader	

	Housing Payments, rent deposits and rent in advance) in partnership between Benefits, HERO and West Kent Housing Association	housing services team			
	Promote an effective, value for money, landlord incentive scheme that encourages more private rented sector landlords to let homes to housing needs referrals	<p>Scheme published/advertised to private sector landlords</p> <p>Landlord event held to promote the scheme</p> <p>Key point of contact for private sector landlords established and better working relationships with local landlords, local agents and the National Landlords Association</p> <p>Increased number of private sector</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Year 1</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Accommodation Team Leader</p> <p>Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Accommodation Team Leader</p> <p>Accommodation Team Leader/ Landlord Liaison Officer</p> <p>Accommodation Team Leader/</p>	

		properties available and reduced number of applicants in emergency/temporary accommodation		Landlord Liaison Officer	
Offering targeted preventions for the most vulnerable – through the provision of agreed pathways into support	Support education and awareness initiatives for young people to highlight the reality of becoming homeless	Develop a Sevenoaks District schools Homelessness Prevention Project	Year 2	Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader/ Accommodation Team Leader <i>Partners:</i> <i>Kent County Council</i> <i>CAB</i>	
	Jointly manage and review key Duty to Refer pathways for those leaving hospital and Care Leavers teams, to improve interventions for the most vulnerable customers	Reduced numbers of 18 to 25 year old homeless applicants Embedded pathways for those leaving hospital and Care Leavers reducing the numbers in emergency and temporary accommodation	Ongoing Year 2	Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader <i>Partners:</i> <i>West Kent Housing Association</i> <i>Kent County Council</i>	

	Develop pathways for prison leavers and those in the criminal justice system through the Accommodation for Ex-Offenders (AFE0) funding	Jointly funded HERO Resettlement Officer in post (funded by AFE0 funding) Reduced number of prison leavers entering emergency and temporary accommodation	Year 2	Housing Advice Team Leader/ Housing Pathway Coordinator Housing Advice Team Leader/ Housing Pathway Coordinator	
	Agree joint working pathways with Children's Services for families who may be intentionally homeless, to minimise the impact of homelessness on these households	Reduced number of intentionally homeless families with children in emergency and temporary accommodation	Year 2	Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader	

Theme 2: Intervention					
Objective	Action	Success Criteria and Outcomes	When	Lead Officer/Team Responsible	Progress
Tackling rough sleeping - continue supporting the County wide approach to reducing harm and addressing associated multiple, complex needs	Work with key delivery partners to deliver a programme of support and initiatives, as part of the Rough Sleeper Initiative 5 funding	Agreed funding framework for rough sleeping services to sustain initiative for next 3 years	Year 1 to 3	Head of Housing/ Homelessness Prevention Manager <i>Partners:</i> <i>Porchlight</i> <i>CAB</i>	
	Develop a District wide support and accommodation approach for customers with the most complex support needs	An established multi-disciplinary team/hub where multiple complex needs cases across the District are managed in one place Reduced number of households with multiple complex need cases in emergency and temporary accommodation	Year 1 and ongoing Ongoing	Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader/ Accommodation Team Leader	
	Continue to use capital and revenue	Completed refurbishment of the		Homelessness Prevention Manager/	

	<p>grants from DLUHC and Homes England, to provide dedicated move on accommodation for former rough sleepers and work collaboratively with relevant partners (for example, West Kent Housing Association and Look Ahead) to ensure the success of those placements</p>	<p>West Kent Housing Association owned Vine Court Road and Orchard Close properties, funded by the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme capital grant round</p> <p>Support services within the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme revenue grant agreed and in place for Vine Court Road and Orchard Close</p> <p>Reduced numbers of rough sleepers</p>	<p>Year 1 and 2</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Housing Advice Team Leader/ Housing Pathway Coordinator</p> <p>Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader</p> <p>Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader/ Housing Pathway Coordinator</p> <p><i>Partners: Porchlight</i></p>	
	<p>Engage with the voluntary sector and</p>	<p>Established District wide homelessness</p>	<p>Year 1 and ongoing</p>	<p>Head of Housing/ Homelessness Prevention Manager/</p>	

	<p>statutory agencies to target and deliver support where it is needed most and make best use of their well established working relationship with this group</p>	<p>forum for relevant for relevant partners</p> <p>Joint plan with voluntary groups for delivering Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) responses and winter night shelters, in place</p> <p>Support rough sleepers and the wider street community by addressing their vulnerability and wider impact on community safety issues</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Housing Advice Team Leader/ Accommodation Team Leader</p> <p><i>Partners:</i> <i>Porchlight</i> <i>West Kent Housing Association</i> <i>CAB</i></p> <p>Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader/ Housing Pathway Coordinator</p> <p>Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader/ Housing Pathway Coordinator</p> <p><i>Partners:</i> <i>Porchlight</i></p>	
Partnership working -	Strategic commitment to	An established multi-disciplinary team/hub	Ongoing	Homelessness Prevention Manager/	

maximise the effectiveness of joint working and pathways for at risk groups	partnership working across various multi-agency panels and forums to find solutions in the most complex of individual cases	where multiple complex needs cases across the County are managed in one place Reduced number of multiple complex needs cases in emergency and temporary accommodation	Ongoing	Housing Advice Team Leader/ Housing Pathway Coordinator Housing Advice Team Leader/ Accommodation Team Leader/ Housing Pathway Coordinator	
	Strategic commitment to close working with Kent Districts and Boroughs to minimise duplication, pool resources and reduce costs	Regular attendance at the Kent Homelessness Officers Group	Ongoing	Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader	
	Continue with consortium applications for grant funding wherever possible, to help maximise funding successes	Successful joint bids with other Kent authorities for future funding opportunities	Year 1 to 5	Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader/Accommodation Team Leader	
	Contribute to County wide efforts to improve	Enhanced housing options to support for	Ongoing	Homelessness Prevention Manager/	

	services and options for victims of domestic abuse	<p>victims of domestic abuse</p> <p>Domestic Abuse Housing Coordinator in post and in attendance at MARAC</p> <p>West Kent Domestic Abuse Forum continues to meet</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Housing Advice Team Leader</p> <p>Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader</p> <p>Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Advice Team Leader</p>	
Temporary housing provide a good quality, safe, secure, value for money accommodation portfolio and reduce the use of emergency placements	Review existing emergency and temporary accommodation provision to ensure value for money across the portfolio	<p>Reduced average cost of emergency per unit</p> <p>Quality portfolio of temporary accommodation properties to better meet a wide range of applicants housing needs in place</p> <p>Continue to optimise the use of West Kent Housing Association and Moat Housing stock as temporary</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Accommodation Team Leader</p> <p>Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Accommodation Team Leader</p> <p><i>Partners:</i> <i>West Kent Housing Association</i></p> <p>Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Housing Accommodation Team Leader</p>	

		accommodation, over and above emergency short term placements			
	Review the Allocation Policy and make the best use of existing social housing stock	Allocation Policy updated, consulted, and approved Reduced void turnaround process between the Council and our partner Housing Associations	Year 1	Homelessness Prevention Manager/Accommodation Team Leader Homelessness Prevention Manager/Accommodation Team Leader/partner Housing Associations	
Rehousing - establish a range of sustainable housing and move on options for homeless households	Ensure cohesive approach to private rented sector procurement and lettings of Assured Shorthold Tenancies and leased properties	Greater range of sustainable move on options for homeless households delivered	Ongoing	Accommodation Team Leader/Landlord Liaison Officer	
	Work with partners in Kent County Council to ensure the commissioning and best use of supported accommodation across the County	Reduce numbers of applicants in emergency accommodation awaiting move on to supported accommodation	Ongoing	Head of Housing/ Homelessness Prevention Manager <i>Partners: West Kent Housing Association</i>	
	Accelerate the delivery of new	Suitable affordable homes delivered in the	Ongoing	Chief Officer, People and Places	

	affordable housing, as part of Quercus Housing and in partnership with the Council's strategic development team, developers and registered providers	District to address housing need			
	Ensure the Allocation Policy balances the needs of homeless and housing register applicants and review existing applications	Revision of Allocation Policy complete and Housing Register list up to date	Year 1	Homelessness Prevention Manager/Accommodation Team Leader	
	Make best use of Disabled Facilities Grants to provide suitable adaptations across the public and private sector and a review of needs undertaken as part of the new Private Sector Housing	More residents continuing to live independently and Disabled Facility Grants statistics reflected in homelessness prevention outcomes	Ongoing	Private Sector Housing Team Leader	

	Assistance Policy 2025-2030				
	Undertake regular assessments of housing need to inform delivery plans for new homes	Comprehensive housing needs assessment completed in partnership with the Planning Policy Team as part of Housing Strategy 2022-2027	TBC	Housing Strategy Manager/ Housing Enabling Officer	
Support – deliver effective services to help customers maintain accommodation once housed.	Provide the HERO and One You services to bridge the gap between health, homelessness and employment/skills	Increase in homelessness preventions	Year 1	Homelessness Prevention Manager/ HERO Team Leader	
	Develop a standalone Tenancy Readiness package to support homeless applicants in specific areas of independent living and tenancy sustainment	Tenancy readiness package developed and implemented	Year 1 and ongoing	Homelessness Prevention Manager/ HERO Team Leader	

Theme 3: Sustainable Solutions					
Objective	Action	Success Criteria and Outcomes	When	Lead Officer/Team Responsible	Progress
Ensure that the emerging Local Plan contains policies that optimise the delivery of a range of affordable homes through the planning system	Local Plan policies drafted	Included in Reg 18 consultation Local Plan adopted by Full Council (following examination)	Year 1 – 12/2022	Housing Enabling Officer/ Planning Policy Officer	
Explore the scope for a managed increase in Quercus Housing's delivery outputs	Develop a scoping paper for Purchase and Repair acquisitions to provide family sized affordable rent and/or temporary accommodation within the District	Revised Business Plan adopted by Quercus Housing Guarantor Board	Annually	Chief Officer, People and Places	
Continue to work with the Rural Housing Enabler (Rural Kent), Parish	5 year programme of local needs surveys undertaken	All Town and Parish Council areas surveyed	Year 3 – 6/2025	Housing Enabling Officer	

Councils and community groups to undertake a programme of local housing needs surveys across the District and to facilitate the delivery of new rural exceptions housing where needs are identified	Assistance provided to facilitate delivery of new local needs housing	At least 30 new local needs homes delivered during the Housing Strategy period, subject to planning approval	Ongoing	Housing Enabling Officer	
Include provisions in the emerging Local Plan to deliver accessible and wheelchair adapted housing	Policies included in new Local Plan to ensure new homes meet the needs of older and disabled households	Policies included in Local Plan Reg 18 consultation and onwards	Year 1 – 12/2022	Housing Enabling Officer/ Planning Policy Officer	
Within the existing Registered Provider stock, seek to refurbish, extend, or	Work with West Kent Housing Association and other Registered Providers to facilitate the best use of the existing	Planning applications submitted for remodelling of stock	Ongoing	Housing Strategy Manager/ Housing Enabling Officer	

repurpose existing dwellings to make better use of them	stock, including the remodelling of social housing schemes that are no longer fit for purpose				
Seek to introduce an enhanced rightsizing incentive scheme for social housing tenants	Subject to agreement with partner Registered Provider's and approval of the use of Section 106 affordable housing commuted sum funding, a rightsizing incentive scheme (including an officer to coordinate the scheme), developed and submitted for approval	Scheme approved by Cabinet	Year 1 – 2/2023	Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Accommodation Team Leader/ Changing Spaces Officer <i>Partners:</i> <i>West Kent Housing Association</i>	
Support owners of empty homes through the Council's membership of	Development of a new Empty Homes Strategy and Action Plan	Empty Homes Strategy and Action Plan approved, and empty homes brought back into use and	Year 1	Housing Strategy Manager/ Empty Homes and Efficiency Officer	

<p>Kent No Use Empty, to create a downward trend in the number of long term empty homes</p>		<p>provided as affordable housing wherever possible</p>			
<p>Create a coalition of temporary and move on accommodation landlords to provide sustainable, reliable, cost effective temporary accommodation</p>	<p>Work with Kent Housing Group to ascertain emergency accommodation charges from private providers across the County and seek consistency</p> <p>Review all emergency accommodation providers used by the Council and develop a preferred provider list</p>	<p>Consistency of charging for temporary accommodation across Kent</p> <p>List of preferred providers in place based on suitability/affordability</p>	<p>Year 1 and 2</p> <p>Year 1 and 2</p>	<p>Head of Housing/ Homelessness Prevention Manager</p> <p>Homelessness Prevention Manager/ Accommodation Team Leader/ Housing Strategy Manager</p>	

Provide regular Landlord Forums to ensure relationships with local private rented sector landlords are strengthened and to maximise the potential for the placement of homeless households into long term housing solutions	Provide regular Landlord Forum events for private sector landlords	Events held	Bi-annually	Head of Housing/ Housing Accommodation Team Leader	
	Develop support pages for landlords on our website, to increase landlord engagement and to highlight any new incentives available	Website updated and reviewed every 6 months	Year 1 and ongoing	Housing Accommodation Team Leader	
	Investigate the provision of web alerts so that landlords are notified of updates	If feasible, web alerts implemented to subscribing landlords	Year 1	Housing Accommodation Team Leader	