

West Berkshire Council

Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025

DRAFT



WestBerkshire
COUNCIL

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1 Introduction

Reasons for homelessness and rough sleeping vary significantly and are not always housing related. Life experiences, sometimes as far back as childhood, can have a severe impact on mental health and can lead to poor decisions that prevent people establishing and maintaining a secure home. These challenges are often compounded and exacerbated by a number of other factors, namely, an insufficient supply of suitable housing (particularly for single people and lone parents), low incomes and the impact of recent government legislation on benefit incomes.

In recent years significant work has been undertaken in West Berkshire to address homelessness and rough sleeping. This has included preventative activities, securing additional funding from central government and fostering partnership working between statutory services, commissioned services and dedicated charities in the district.

The above work will continue via the recently established Homelessness Strategy Group, the Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) initiative and the Housing First project. Additionally, the Council's Housing Strategy to be published in Summer 2020 and related Housing Service Improvement Plan will be integral to several of the core priorities presented in this Strategy.



This Strategy is underpinned by a detailed Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review undertaken in September and October 2019 which has provided a comprehensive assessment of homelessness in the district and identifies key issues and trends based upon in depth data analysis, desk research and extensive consultation with service users and stakeholders.

This Strategy articulates core priorities for the next five years which are in line with prevention and early intervention agendas promoted in the recently enacted Homelessness Reduction Act (2017). They can be summarised as:

- Enhanced prevention and early intervention
- Address Rough Sleeping
- An increased range of housing options for residents of West Berkshire
- Further Enhanced Partnership Working
- Enhanced Communication for all client groups.

“In recent years significant work has been undertaken in West Berkshire to address homelessness and rough sleeping.”

2 Strategic Context

Legislation relating to homelessness and rough sleeping has been subject to a significant overhaul in recent years as outlined below.

2.1 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA), which came into force in April 2018, introduced additional duties for Local Government. In summary, these require that:

- Eligible households threatened with homelessness in the next 56 days must be assessed and have a personalised housing plan in place whether or not they have a local connection, are in priority need or are intentionally homeless.
- Eligible households who are homeless must be assessed and have a personalised housing plan in place whether or not they are in priority need or are intentionally homeless.
- If a household has been served with a valid Section 21 notice, they are automatically owed the prevention duty by their Local Authority.
- Where a Local Authority, working with a household, is unable to prevent homelessness the household will be owed a relief duty for 56 days.
- The relief duty is activated as soon as the household becomes homeless (a household without a local connection can at this point be referred to the Local Authority with whom they have a connection).
- For eligible homeless households in priority need an offer of temporary accommodation is required. The relief duty runs for up to 56 days and if homelessness is not relieved the household is then fully assessed under Part 7 of the Housing Act and a decision made about whether the full homelessness duty is owed.
- Households are owed a prevention and relief duty regardless of whether they are deemed to be intentionally homeless.

2.2 Rough Sleeper Strategy 2018

Published in August 2018 the [Rough Sleeper Strategy](#) contained an emphasis on a growth in collaboration and use of homelessness charities including Crisis and Homelessness Link to take the lead in shaping policy and development in national homelessness.

2.3 The Rough Sleeper Initiative

The Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) was launched by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in March 2018 and was targeted at local authorities with the highest numbers of people sleeping rough, based on the 2017 rough sleeping snapshot.

The initiative seeks to support people sleeping rough off the streets and develop their wellbeing and stability, so helping to reduce the number of people sleeping rough in both the short and longer term.

Within the RSI, MHCLG also launched the Rapid Rehousing Pathway. The Pathway brings together 4 policy interventions (Somewhere Safe to Stay, Supported Lettings, Navigators and Local Lettings Agencies) that will help rough sleepers, and those at risk of rough sleeping, access the support and settled housing they need to leave the streets for good.



3 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review 2019- Summary Findings

The extensive Review, comprising of in depth desk and field research, provided a detailed evidence base from which the priorities set out in this Strategy were developed. The summary below provides an overview of the key findings to provide context.

3.1 Analysed Data

Numbers:

There were 1,765 presentations to Housing Options in the year ending March 2019 of which 572 were owed a duty (broadly half involving a prevention duty and half a relief duty). In terms of rough sleepers for England as a whole, rough sleeping has risen year on year since 2010. Whilst the position in West Berkshire has fluctuated over the same period, there has been a reduction since the peak in 2014 (23) to 10 in 2019.

Circumstances:

The most common circumstance for those owed a duty in 2018/19 was a position of having no fixed abode (31%). Furthermore, 18% were registered as living with family and 5% living with friends. Combined, 54%, presented without independent accommodation. This compares with 38% presenting from a private rented or social tenancy (23% and 14% respectively).

The most common reason for loss of a last settled home for those owed a duty in 2018/19 was the end of a private rented shorthold tenancy (21% plus a further 2% from private rented accommodation with no tenancy in place). This was closely followed by family / friends no longer willing to provide a home (19%) and 10% lost their last settled home due to the end of a social rented tenancy. Reasons for potential loss of an assured tenancy included non-payment / consistent late

payment of rent and anti-social behaviour. The payment of Housing Benefit directly to vulnerable tenants rather than to the landlord is seen to be a significant cause of the loss of a settled home, particularly among more vulnerable clients.

Demography:

The most numerous age band for those owed a duty in 2018/19 was 25-34 (29%), followed by 35-44 (22%), 18-24 (21%) and 45-54 (18%). Of note 10% of those presenting were aged 55 plus. In terms of gender, 44% of single adults owed a duty in 2018/19 were female (135 with dependent children and 114 without); 37% were male (12 with dependent children and 200 without). 18% were either households with couples or 3 or more adults (65 with dependent children and 45 without). In essence, two thirds of households / individuals owed a duty did not have dependent children and a third did. The vast majority of applicants owed a duty in 2018/19 were white (British / Irish / Other).

3.2 Resources

Commissioned Resources:

In addition to the support provided by the Council's housing team there are two additional services commissioned directly to support homeless people and rough sleepers.

Two Saints manages a 59-room direct access hostel with shared facilities and full-board catered service, a 16-room facility offering supported move-on accommodation and a further 5 rooms of supported housing. Additionally, they provide 2 outreach workers and tenancy sustainment for the Housing First project.

The Housing First project was launched in West Berkshire in May 2019 to support homeless people with complex needs by providing a long-term place to live with an assured tenancy and ongoing support. It comprises of partnership work between the Council, Sovereign HA and Two Saints. The initiative is funded through the Rough Sleeping Initiative and beneficiaries do not need to prove they are ready for independent housing.

Independent Resources:

The district also benefits from well-respected and dedicated resources that are largely independent of statutory funding. These include:

- **Loose Ends** drop-in centre in Newbury (open 5 days a week) which provides hot meals, donated food, toiletries, clothes and bedding; and a safe, friendly atmosphere where people can socialise and access advice and support. Outreach workers and other professionals visit on a regular basis and clients are signposted to other agencies.
- **The Newbury Soup Kitchen** offers a drop-in centre on Thursday evenings and a Saturday Soup Service. In addition to providing a hot meal and other donated food, volunteers with enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) provide support and advice and signposting. Furthermore, a Health Outreach Liaison Team (HOLT) nurse led clinic and a dental clinic are held on alternate weeks. The drop-in is also attended by professionals and volunteers from other organisations. The charity (Haven) is seeking to extend provision via a new building with the support of the Greenham Trust.
- **West Berkshire Homeless (Newbury area)**, a community-based charity in West Berkshire, assists the homeless back into work where possible, and accommodation via mentoring, signposting (for example, to legal support), developing relationships with private landlords and providing advocacy. The Charity also runs 10 units of move-on accommodation and have coordinated a night shelter for two successive winters (which ran in 2018/19 into spring).
- **West Berkshire Food Bank**, founded by local churches and community groups, receives substantial support from the Greenham Common Trust. The group's key objective is to work together towards relieving hunger in Newbury, Thatcham, Burghfield and Mortimer, Hungerford and Lambourn.

- Healthwatch West Berkshire is a local consumer champion for health and social care services which has taken an active interest in homelessness and rough sleeping in the district and promoted key actions to improve access to health services.

- Community Resource Centre supports Housing First with furniture and other essentials.

Indirect Resources:

Additional resources that play a key role in supporting people at risk of homelessness / homeless are as follows:

- **Sovereign HA:** Thomas Askew House, Newbury housing for vulnerable adults. 26 units; studios; 1-bedroom accommodation. Matthews Close, Thatcham.
- **Swanswell West Berkshire:** alcohol and drug recovery service for adults, 15 to 20% of the case load have issues that include actual homelessness or the risk of homelessness.
- **Eight Bells for Mental Health:** a member-led peer support group for people with mental health issues which meets twice a week with other events held periodically. Some homeless and rough sleepers participate.
- **Garland Court and Bramble Court:** 13 flats specifically for people with mental health needs, a 9 – 5 service Monday – Friday commissioned by WBC with the service provided by Richmond Fellowship. The landlord is L&Q.
- **Bramlings House:** Supported Accommodation for young people aged 12 to 24 Comprising 12 single rooms plus 13 self-contained flats of which 8 are for young parents. The landlord is A2 Dominion.
- **Step by Step:** 26 beds in hosts' homes funded by Children's Services.

Housing Supply:

According to GOV.UK live tables there were 67,900 dwellings in West Berkshire in 2018. Since 2012 the housing supply has increased by on average 522 units per year. In 2017/18 the increase was 526, the majority of which (466) were new builds. The supply of affordable dwellings has increased by an average of 103 per year since 2012 and in 2017/18 by 129 (46 for social rent, 5 for affordable rent and 78 other affordable housing).

Circa 14% of the housing stock is social rented and a similar proportion is private rented. According to monthly rents recorded between April 2018 and March 2019 by the Valuations Office Agency, the mean monthly rental (for social and private rented stock) was £1,050 (the lower quartile being £850 and the upper quartile being £1,150). Average market figures for solely private rented properties (from home.co.uk for October 2019) ranged from £758 for a 1-bedroom property to £1,496 for a 4 bedroom.

According to Census 2011 ([Table KS401EW](#): Dwellings, household spaces and accommodation type) the number of HMOs (houses in multiple occupation- which are particularly valuable resources for move on accommodation and first homes) in West Berkshire are significantly below the average for the South East Region. Of note this is also the case for neighbouring Authorities with the exception of Reading Borough Council.

The same data release indicated that circa 70% of properties were either owned outright or via a mortgage or loan. On the lower end of the



market, according to Land Registry figures for July 2019, flats / maisonettes have an average value of £202,000 with Terraced houses having an average value of £280,000.

3.3 Consultation

Service Users:

Interviews with rough sleepers and service users were undertaken mostly during visits to Loose Ends, Two Saints (210 Newtown Road), and The Newbury Soup Kitchen between 11th and 19th September. The majority of service users engaged with were residents from Two Saints. Additionally, interviews were undertaken with individuals who had been rough sleeping in Newbury for some time, two of whom did not have a local connection.

The respondent profile included males and females with a range of complex issues and histories that had contributed to their circumstances, including mental and physical health issues, a history of alcohol and drug addictions and violent relationship breakdown. Half had children (either living with a former partner or in care) and all faced challenges in maintaining relationships with their children while in temporary accommodation or rough sleeping. One was employed in regular part time work and only one (a travelling busker) did not rely on benefit income.

Stakeholders:

Feedback from stakeholders was gained via a combination of visits to various establishments, telephone and face to face interviews, a self-completion survey completed by 23 stakeholders and a feedback session at the October Homelessness Strategy Group. Feedback was given by a full range of groups including, personnel from statutory bodies, commissioned organisations and independent charities and pressure groups as well as political representatives.

Outcomes from the consultation with both service users and stakeholders have been included in significant detail in the Review and have contributed to the Key Challenges, Recent Achievements and Key Priorities sections that follow below (sections 5, 6 and 7 respectively).

4 Key challenges

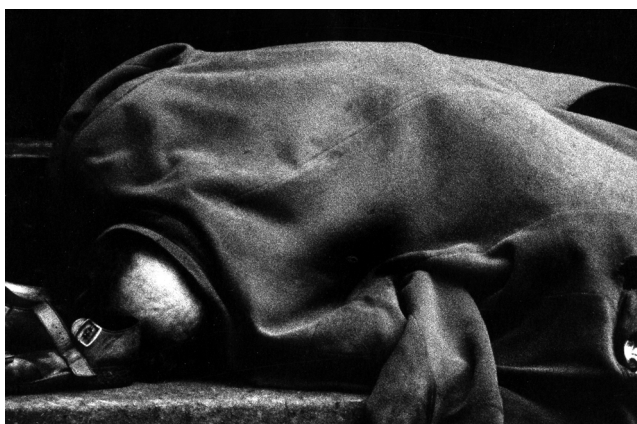
The Review drew attention to a wide range of factors including key challenges facing those who were homeless or at risk of homelessness and the organisations and individuals that support them. The perceived key challenges are summarised below.

Accommodation – Supply and Affordability:

There are shortages across a range of affordable accommodation in the district including:

- Suitable move on accommodation for single homeless
- Larger households, particularly in social housing, under occupying
- Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) accommodation leading to delayed move on from hostel accommodation
- Properties with affordable rents in the private sector partly caused by the 'Vodafone effect' and exacerbated by the low Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates making properties unaffordable
- Temporary accommodation leading to out of area placements.

The absence of a compelling Private Rented Sector (PRS) offer from the Council that encourages partnership with local landlords is an issue but it is understood this is being addressed in the Council's new Service Improvement Plan.



The Local Housing Allowance LHA at 30% percentile is a continuing challenge and currently the Council is topping up rents where needed. There is also the impact of Universal Credit which is having an adverse effect on the most vulnerable.

Benefits

- The LHA is significantly below market rents for all property sizes, making access to the private rented sector a major challenge.
- As at 31 March 2019 the Benefit Cap impacted on 56 households in West Berkshire. The Benefit Cap does not take into account size of family meaning an increased risk of homelessness for families with three or more children.
- Under occupation charge. As at 31 March 2019, 416 Housing Benefit claimants were subject to a 14% reduction in their benefits and 65 households subject to a 25% deduction. The accommodation shortage in the district can leave few options for these people to find suitable alternative accommodation.
- Universal Credit went live in West Berkshire in December 2017 and requests for assistance in completing applications for those requiring digital support totalled 346 during 2018/19. In addition, there were 41 requests for assistance from clients requiring 'personal budgeting support'.

Partnership working:

Whilst partnership working has increased significantly in the last year via various initiatives and groups, stakeholder respondents highlighted a need to foster greater trust and alignment between statutory, commissioned and charitable services.

Access to Services:

There are perceived challenges facing the most vulnerable in terms of barriers to health services (GP, A&E, Dental) and previous rent arrears acting as a barrier to accessing the housing register.

The Two Saints direct hostel:

This being the main accommodation of this nature in the district, it is not surprising that it featured significantly in all elements of the consultation. Whilst there was recognition of the good work undertaken by staff at Two Saints areas of concern were raised and these included:

- People who leave Two Saints (210 and 107) because they cannot cope in the environment within the buildings, e.g. people with mental health and addiction issues, do not receive extra points on the Housing Register.
- A reluctance among some applicants to accept the accommodation at Two Saints due to perceived drug use within the schemes and the reluctance of private landlords to offer them a tenancy if they have Two Saints on their address history.
- Rent arrears- residents with drug and alcohol problems who receive Direct Payments use the money for other reasons than rent.

Funding challenges / workloads:

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) has put significant pressure on staff resources. The housing department recognised the challenge ahead and recruited additional staff however there remain challenges in meeting the needs of the number of the people accessing the service, which in turn puts pressure on staff workloads.

Local Connection:

Cases where vulnerable people in fear of violence in their place of origin and will not engage with the police means the absence of having local connection cannot be waived. Also there is a perception that hospital discharge and prison releases occur without checking the local connection.

The Common Housing Register:

The current housing register is based on a points system whereas a banding system is considered by many to be a more appropriate approach.

5 Recent achievements

The Review outlines significant achievements in recent years by the Council and its partners in the delivery of services to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping. This has included adopting and applying new legislation, proactively sourcing and accessing funding, implementing good practice to create innovative solutions and pathways and collaborating widely to develop strong partnerships.

5.1 Key outcomes from the Housing Service

The Housing Service has responded to the new demands of the HRA, in terms of prevention and relief duty owed and enhanced data collection. Recent outcomes resulting from interventions by the Housing Service were as follows:

Prevention Duty Outcomes:

Of the 232 cases where prevention duty ended between April 2018 and March 2019, the vast majority (68%) had secured accommodation for 6 + months. Just over 10% remained or were rendered homeless (including those intentionally so). In terms of the activities that resulted in accommodation being secured, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) proved to be the most common (33% of cases). Other key interventions included, accommodation secured by the LA, help to secure accommodation found by applicant (with and without financial payment) and negotiation / mediation / advocacy work to prevent eviction / repossession.

Relief Duty Outcomes:

Of the 227 cases in West Berkshire where relief duty ended between April 2018 and March 2019 in half of these cases households had secured accommodation for 6 + months. For those where accommodation was secured a quarter retained accommodation in social rented housing, a further 14% did so in private rented housing. In 59% of cases the type of accommodation is not known. In terms of the activities that resulted in accommodation being secured, the provision of supported housing proved to be the most common (45% of cases).

5.2 Partnership

Increased partnership working has been at the heart of recent progress in the District. This has taken the form of establishing widely based forums and adopting innovative good practice. Key achievements are as follows:

- **Homelessness Strategy Group (established 2018):** Comprising representatives from statutory services, commissioned providers and charities. The group meets quarterly to discuss specific cases and wider strategic objectives.

- **Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM):** A MEAM Steering Group was established and the MEAM Approach adopted in 2017. The MEAM concept represents a tried and tested scheme designed to employ a co-ordinated approach to help tackle the root cause of homelessness. The initiative received positive feedback in the stakeholder consultation as a forum for enhanced partnership working for high profile cases which has led to better working practices.

- **Disadvantaged Adult Resolution Meeting (DARM):** The DARM superseded the Rough Sleepers Task and Targeting Meeting, the MEAM Operational Group and the Blue Light Operational Group. It was formed in June 2019 and took over responsibility for the previous three meetings/groups. The meeting is chaired in part by three lead officers who take responsibility of the different parts of the meeting.

- **Housing First:** This initiative was launched in West Berkshire in May 2019 to support homeless people with complex needs by providing a long-term place to live with ongoing support. Beneficiaries do not need to prove they are ready for independent housing. The initiative in West Berkshire has been funded through the Rough Sleeping Initiative. The aim of the project is to access, within the first year, 10 one-bedroom flats from Sovereign Housing Association's general needs stock with housing related support provided by Two Saints.

- Accessing Additional funding

The Council have been proactive in sourcing and accessing additional funding to alleviate homelessness and rough sleeping. This has included the following significant achievements:

- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) awarded the Council RSI funding of £211,000 for 2018/19 and £265,000 for 2019/20 to deliver a range of interventions to prevent and relieve rough sleeping.
- Further funding of £103,000 was awarded for 2019/20 through the MHCLG's Rapid Rehousing Pathway to provide additional interventions to support rough sleepers into sustainable accommodation.



“The Council have been proactive in sourcing and accessing additional funding to alleviate homelessness and rough sleeping.”

6 Key Priorities

This Strategy covers the period 2020 to 2025 and seeks to build upon the progress highlighted in the previous section by focussing on five critical priorities. The priorities have been agreed by the Executive Member for Economic Development and Planning and the Council's Housing Board.

6.1 Priority One - Enhanced prevention and early intervention

Meeting the challenges of enhanced prevention and early intervention is a key task for the Council and this has grown in significance since the introduction of the HRA in April 2018. In meeting these challenges the Council will work proactively to address the causes of homelessness and rough sleeping. The key areas here include addressing:

- Affordability in both the private and social housing rented sectors
- The loss of private sector tenancies
- Social issues including family breakdown, domestic abuse and adverse childhood experiences
- Discharge from hospital / prison
- The lack of access to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

To improve outcomes for those who are homeless or face homelessness a clear and effective approach to service delivery is essential.

KEY OBJECTIVES / ACTIONS:

- **HOUSING REGISTER:** The Council will review its points-based Housing Register system with one that considers the use of bands to measure housing need and so address the current issues and barriers being experienced by applicants and the organisations that support them.
- **PERFORMANCE MONITORING:** A key step in delivering enhanced prevention is performance monitoring and analysis and the Council will introduce:
 - Better data collection methodologies
 - Robust monitoring in relation to delivering the targets set within the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA)
 - Staff training to ensure that all personnel are able to analyse and use the data effectively to monitor success and address challenges through service re design where necessary.
- **MAINTAINING TENANCIES:** Identify and act upon the triggers that exacerbate the loss of tenancies, for example, by working with the statutory and charitable sectors to provide tenancy support services for those moving on from supported accommodation and those who present with repeated homelessness.
- **EARLY INTERVENTION:** This is key to prevention and the Review has shown that affordability is a major challenge in the district within both private rented and social housing. To address this, work will be undertaken with clients prior to their reaching the top of the Common Housing Register to improve their chances of meeting the affordability criteria set by landlords. This will include working with educational establishments and local businesses to expand opportunities for skills and employment training.

6.2 Priority Two – Addressing rough sleeping

In September 2019 West Berkshire Council adopted: ‘Reducing rough sleeping in West Berkshire: A plan to ensure no-one has the need to sleep rough’. In the document, a detailed Action Plan sets out how the Council, working with partners, plans to address the challenging goal through work across five areas (as shown below) which will form a key component of this Strategy.

KEY OBJECTIVES / ACTIONS:

- Delivering targeted support and accommodation services that meet the needs of rough sleepers
- Providing innovative solutions to assist entrenched rough sleepers to leave the streets
- Improving the health and well-being of rough sleepers
- Preventing residents at risk of rough sleeping from needing to sleep rough
- Tackling the negative public perceptions surrounding rough sleeping

6.3 Priority Three - Increase the range of housing options for residents of West Berkshire

An essential requirement for improving the options available to those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness is delivering a wider range of housing options within the term of this 5-year Strategy.

KEY OBJECTIVES / ACTIONS:

- **HOUSING FIRST:** To maintain and increase Housing First accommodation, in the first instance by reaching the proposed stock target of 10 properties and then identify and provide a further 10 properties within years 2 to 5 of the Strategy. To achieve this:
 - Work proactively with Sovereign HA, the largest provider of social housing in the district, and build relationships with other providers to achieve further growth
 - Work proactively with Private Sector Landlords and Agencies in the district to seek opportunities.
 - Widen the representation of the Housing First panel to include representatives from the Building Communities Together team and a specialist police officer to provide greater insight and information to the decision-making process.
 - The Council will need to build on their draft exit strategy in order to find ways to provide funding for this extended provision due to the uncertainty of RSI funding beyond March 2020.
- **TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION:** A key aim of the Council is to decrease the use of temporary accommodation within the life of the Strategy and eliminate the use of emergency bed and breakfast accommodation. Currently the Council is purchasing three properties within the district.
- **HMOs:** A lack of HMOs in the district has also been identified as a major challenge and to increase this provision the Council will work to identify possible private sector provision. Recent data suggests that there are 35 – 40 licensed HMOs plus an estimated 300 unlicensed. Engagement with the latter by the Public Protection Partnership and Housing Service will be

undertaken to improve access. The requirement here is not only related to move-on accommodation for those leaving supported provision but also accommodation for younger people who are unable to afford a self-contained studio / flat to enable them to move into their first home.

- **SUPPORTED LODGINGS:** The housing service are currently reviewing supported lodgings and will be working collaboratively with other departments such as, Children Services to identify better access.
- **AFFORDABLE HOUSING:** The Council will work to increase the stock of affordable housing with the private rented sector (PRS) and the social housing sector through:
 - Developing a new PRS offer as identified within the Housing Service Improvement Plan (SIP)
 - Take a wider approach to 'downsizing' by creating a Strategy whereby Occupational Therapists (OTs) are 'solution focused' from their first appointment with a resident rather than offering adaptations as a first choice as these will be removed when a family moves into the home following a void
 - Proactively work with developers to build more appropriate affordable housing through S106 agreements
 - Extend current partnership working to include a wider range of Registered Providers.
- **COMPLEX NEEDS:** Increase the types of accommodation available that better match peoples' needs:
 - Creating Zones within the accommodation in Two Saints that are more conducive to peoples' circumstances
 - During the life of the Strategy work with a wider range of landlords and support providers to offer more small-scale accommodation which may be more suitable for those with complex needs and better meet the needs of the district.
 - Identify and implement a Strategy to address the above.
- **EMPTY HOMES:** The Council will review resources and priorities to address the challenge of bringing empty homes back into use.
- **GYPSY, TRAVELLER, SHOW PERSON ACCOMMODATION:** Requirements for this social group are considered in detail in the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Show Person Accommodation Assessment 2019 (GTAA 2019) commissioned by West Berkshire Council. The key outcomes and objectives (as highlighted below) should form a key component of this Strategy.

KEY OBJECTIVES / ACTIONS:

- In terms of future need this document concluded that, if the potential respective impact of turnover and regularisation at existing authorised and unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller sites is taken into account, pitch shortfalls for the period 2018/19- 2022/23 would be limited to 14 pitches overall. In the event that these requirements are adopted it is taken that action by the Council would follow established Planning and Development Plan Documents (DPD) revision processes.
- **TRAVELLING SHOW PERSONS:** GTAA 2019 concluded that any future need for Travelling Show Person residential plot accommodation can be addressed at the existing Long Copse yard.

6.4 Priority Four – Further enhance partnership working

Following on from the previous Strategy it is recognised that the Council and its partners have achieved considerable success in improving partnership working in recent years. A key strand in this Strategy is to build on the work already achieved. Partnership is something that needs to span all the priorities of this Strategy, for example, maintaining tenancies (Priority One) and widening the membership of the Housing First panel (Priority Two). There are a number of areas of direct partnership working development that will support the delivery of this Strategy and these are outlined below with key objectives and actions.

KEY OBJECTIVES / ACTIONS:

- **HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY GROUP (HSG):** To work towards making the HSG more strategic and so make a more robust contribution to addressing the key objectives of this Strategy. This should include:
 - Focussing on the group's scrutiny and challenge function
 - Making the forum more structured via a review of the terms of reference
 - Rolling out the MEAM approach to impact on a wider caseload
 - Work to align the full range of resources available (statutory, commissioned and charitable) to address homelessness resolution pathways.
- **OBTAINING FUNDING:** Partnership work to identify and bid for new initiatives, building upon recent successes (e.g. MEAM, Housing First, RSI and RRP).
- **LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS:** Engage with local businesses to develop opportunities for support (e.g. as is done with the night shelter) and for service users directly such as training opportunities, apprenticeships and work opportunities (e.g. furniture store / bike renovation).
- **MULTI-AGENCY WORKING:** Put a Strategy in place to create:
 - Faster pathways for people at risk or actually homeless to physical and mental health services
 - Interventions, including with schools, to develop an Adverse Child Experiences (ACE) Strategy that will reduce the incidences of homelessness into the future
 - A 'community hub' where service users can meet with professionals / charities to discuss their housing and wider challenges at an early stage
 - A Landlord Forum which will meet on a bi-annual basis to promote partnership working and increase the availability of PRS accommodation in the district
 - A high-level strategic group to lobby Government for funds for homelessness and rough sleeping.
- **INTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS:** Enhance partnership working:
 - With staff in the planning department to influence permissions so developments meet the needs of the residents of West Berkshire rather than accommodation that has space standards that are more beneficial for transient workers / commuters
 - Through introducing strategies to meet the housing needs of the younger community to prevent them leaving the district and in so doing boost the local economy of West Berkshire
 - Through introducing strategies to address the needs of the rural communities in the district who face challenges accessing services which are, in the main, located in Newbury.
- **MOVE ON:** Introduce a 'planned process' for move-on accommodation to ease the issues of blockages in supported housing.

6.5 Priority Five – Enhance Communication for all client groups

Good and accessible information is central to addressing homelessness and rough sleeping.

KEY OBJECTIVES / ACTIONS:

- **KEY PREVENTATIVE MESSAGES:** Improve communication to prevent homelessness through providing:
 - Information packs for clients and partners in accessible formats
 - Targeted information campaigns, e.g. via the internet, social media, local publications and radio
- **ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCESS:**
 - Ensure improved information that is accessible on the Council's Website
 - Establish support to address digital exclusion, e.g. better staff training to identify cases where service users may face disadvantage. This could also include partnership with relevant charities
 - Approach local businesses to assist with funding for the above as part of their Social Value offer, e.g. Veolia and AWE.

7 Delivering the Strategy

To deliver the priorities outlined above it will be essential to ensure that the Council and key partners have the working forums and drive to implement change.

Reporting to the Health and Wellbeing Board the Homelessness Strategy Group will be a key forum for this Strategy which will sit within the wider Housing Strategy and be influenced strongly by the related Housing Service Improvement Plan.

Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020- 2025

Delivery Plan

No	Actions	Outcomes	Lead	2020/21 Completion	2021/22 Completion	2022/23 Completion	2023 Completion	Comments	Status
A West Berkshire where everyone has what they need to fulfil their potential									
Priority One - Enhanced prevention and early intervention									
1.1	Housing Register - Review and change the Council's points based Common Housing Register system with one that considers the use of bands to measure housing need and address barriers experienced by applicants and the organisations that support them.	A new HR and policy with bands approved and launched by March 2021 and the outcome of the review is a new implemented CHR system.	Strategy Development and Review Manager	✓				Review of CHR and policy will be achieved with existing budget allocation and form part of SIP.	Not due to start
1.2	Performance Monitoring - Introduce better data collection methodologies - robust monitoring in relation to delivering targets set within HRA 2017- Staff training to enable analysis, effective use of data to monitor success and address challenges through service re-design.	Robust data collection methods will be implemented. Staff fully trained and performance monitoring framework implemented (SIP action)	Housing Service Manager	✓				Robust performance monitoring framework will be developed utilising existing budget allocation by March 2020.	Not due to start
1.3	Maintaining tenancies - Identify and manage the triggers that exacerbate the loss of tenancies and work with statutory and charitable sectors to deliver and provide tenancy support services (move on and repeat homelessness)	Triggers for loss of tenancies will be identified and tenancy support provision implemented (SIP action)	Homelessness Prevention Manager	✓				Part of this has already been achieved through the Homelessness review. Support service provision is already in place but requires a refresh which can be achieved through existing budget allocation by March 2021.	Not due to start

No	Actions	Outcomes	Lead	2020/21 Completion	2021/22 Completion	2022/23 Completion	2023 Completion	Comments	Status
1.4	Early Intervention - Housing Services will work with clients prior to them reaching the top of the Common Housing Register to improve their chances of meeting the affordability criteria set by landlords. In addition, investigate working with educational establishments and local businesses to expand opportunities for skills and employment training.	Affordability assessments will be part of CHR process. Educational establishments and local businesses will have been approached about employment opportunities and training and any additional opportunities for skills and employment training will be implemented.	Homeless Prevention Manager	✓				Affordability assessments will form part of CHR process by March 2020 therefore will be achieved through the exiting budget allocation.	Not due to start
Priority Two - Addressing Rough Sleeping									
1.5	Reducing rough sleeping in West Berkshire: A Plan to ensure no-one has the need to sleep rough <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivering targeted support and accommodation services that meet the needs of rough sleepers Providing innovative solutions to assist entrenched rough sleepers to leave the streets Improving the health and well-being of rough sleepers Preventing residents at risk of rough sleeping from needing to sleep rough Tackling the negative public perceptions surrounding rough sleeping Through collaborative working with our partners on HSG (Homelessness Strategy Group) and MHCLG these actions will be delivered	Rough Sleeping Plan action plan delivered	Rough Sleeping Initiative Co-ordinator		✓			A number of the actions identified in the Rough Sleeping plan such as delivering targeted support and innovative solutions and preventing risks are already in development using existing budgets and recently submitted RSI bids.	Not due to start

No	Actions	Outcomes	Lead	2020/21 Completion	2021/22 Completion	2022/23 Completion	2023 Completion	Comments	Status
A West Berkshire with a housing mix with something for everyone									
Priority Three - Increase the range of housing options for residents of west Berkshire									
1.6	HOUSING FIRST - To maintain and increase Housing First accommodation by acquiring 10 properties by 20/21 and a further 10 properties within 2 to 5 years of the strategy. This will be achieved through our work with Sovereign HA and Private Sector Landlords and Agencies in the district. We will also review the Housing First panel to include representatives from the Building Communities Together team and a specialist police officer to provide greater insight and information to the decision-making process. Continue to work on future funding provisions due to the uncertainty of RSI funding beyond March 2020.	Housing First targets will be achieved. Bids to secure future funding submitted and financial planning completed to manage the uncertainty of RSI funding.	Rough Sleeping Initiative Co-ordinator		✓			The financial implications for Housing First if RSI funding does not continue will result in not being able to fund and secure further properties, however, to mitigate this financial and budget planning to include reprioritisation of spend will be completed within existing budgets.	Not due to start
1.7	TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION: Decrease the use of temporary accommodation within the life of the Strategy and eliminate the use of emergency bed and breakfast accommodation by purchasing additional properties within the district.	The use of temporary accommodation will be reduced and bed and breakfast usage eliminated	Homelessness Prevention Manager	✓				This action is already part of operational activity within the housing service and existing budget allocation.	Not due to start
1.8	SUPPORTED LODGINGS: Review supported lodgings and work collaboratively with other departments such as, Children Services to identify better access to develop this scheme	Review of supported lodgings will be complete and scheme developed for implementation	Housing Service Manager	✓				This review will occur as part of operational activity and any budgeting allocation will form part of Homelessness Prevention Budget	Not due to start

No	Actions	Outcomes	Lead	2020/21 Completion	2021/22 Completion	2022/23 Completion	2023 Completion	Comments	Status
1.9	<p>AFFORDABLE HOUSING: The Council will work to increase affordable housing with the private rented sector (PRS) and the social housing sector by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing a new PRS offer as identified within the Housing Service Improvement Plan (SIP) - Take a wider approach to 'downsizing' by creating a Strategy whereby Occupational Therapists (OTs) are 'solution focused' from their first appointment with a resident rather than offering adaptations as a first choice as these will be removed when a family moves into the home - Proactively work with developers to build more appropriate affordable housing through S106 agreements - Extend current partnership working to include a wider range of Registered Providers 	<p>PRS offer will be implemented. Downsizing project implemented, S106 agreements in place for AH, RP Forum will be set up to include a wider range of RPs</p> <p>Work with Two Saints will align with contractual arrangements</p>	Housing Service Manager		✓			<p>Budget allocation is already in place for PRS offer.</p>	Not due to start
1.10	<p>COMPLEX NEEDS: Increase the types of accommodation available that better match peoples' needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review the zones within the accommodation at Two Saints to better align with peoples' circumstances - During the life of the Strategy work with a wider range of landlords and support providers to offer more small-scale accommodation which may be more suitable for those with complex needs and better meet the needs of the district. - Identify and implement a Move-On Strategy to address the above. 	<p>Zones within Two Saints will be completed as part of annual review.</p> <p>Landlord forum launched and will enable wider range of landlords and opportunities to secure more small scale accommodation.</p> <p>Move on strategy will be delivered.</p>	Housing Service Manager			✓		<p>Budget allocation for commissioning service for Two Saints already in place.</p> <p>Existing budget allocation for Landlord forum already identified.</p> <p>Move on strategies identified as part of SIP and use of existing budget will form part of delivery.</p>	Not due to start

No	Actions	Outcomes	Lead	2020/21 Completion	2021/22 Completion	2022/23 Completion	2023 Completion	Comments	Status
1.11	EMPTY HOMES: The Council will review resources and priorities to address the challenge of bringing empty homes back into use.	More empty homes will be bought back into use.	Strategy Development and Review Manager			✓		Work completed with PPP will identify if any allocated budget required March 2020.	Not due to start
1.12	GYPSY, TRAVELLER, SHOW PERSON ACCOMMODATION: Requirements for this social group are considered in detail in the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Show Person Accommodation Assessment 2019 (GTAA 2019) commissioned by West Berkshire Council. Pitch shortfalls for the period 2018/19 - 2022/23 would be limited to 14 pitches overall. In the event that these requirements are adopted it is taken that action by the Council would follow established Planning and Development Plan Documents (DPD) revision processes. Any future need for Travelling Show Person residential plot accommodation can be addressed at the existing Long Copse yard.	Future need for Gypsy, Travelling Show Person accommodation will be addressed	Strategy Development and Review Manager			✓		Will form part of generated activity therefore achieve through existing budget allocation by March 2023.	Not due to start

No	Actions	Outcomes	Lead	2020/21 Completion	2021/22 Completion	2022/23 Completion	2023 Completion	Comments	Status
A West Berkshire that welcomes business, enterprise and industry into a productive, growing and dynamic local economy									
Priority Four - Further enhance partnership working									
1.13	HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY GROUP (HSG): To work towards making the HSG more strategic and so make a more robust contribution to addressing the key objectives of this Strategy. This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focussing on the group's scrutiny and challenge function - Making the forum more structured via a review of the terms of reference - Rolling out the MEAM approach to impact on a wider caseload - Work to align the full range of resources available (statutory, commissioned and charitable) to address homelessness resolution pathways 	HSG will be strategic with robust objectives and a revised TOR that will inform the structure. MEAM will be rolled out as an approach within the Housing Service. Homeless pathway will be in place.	Housing Service Manager	✓				Within existing budget allocation and partnership working for March 2020	Not due to start
1.14	OBTAINING FUNDING: Work in partnership to identify and bid for new initiatives, building upon recent successes (e.g. MEAM, Housing First, RSI and RRP)	Additional funding bids will be identified	Housing Service Manager		✓	✓	✓		Not due to start
1.15	LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS: Engage with local businesses to develop opportunities for support and for service users directly such as, training opportunities, apprenticeships and work opportunities (e.g. furniture store / bike renovation)	Local businesses will be identified and opportunities secured for training, apprenticeships and work	Housing Service Manager		✓			Existing budget allocated March 2021	Not due to start

No	Actions	Outcomes	Lead	2020/21 Completed	2021/22 Completed	2022/23 Completed	2023 Completed	Comments	Status
1.16	MULTI-AGENCY WORKING: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create clear pathway for people at risk or actually homeless to physical and mental health services - Interventions, including with schools, to develop an Adverse Child Experiences (ACE) Strategy that will reduce the incidences of homelessness into the future - A 'community hub' where service users can meet with professionals / charities to discuss their housing and wider challenges at an early stage - A Landlord Forum which will meet on a bi-annual basis to promote partnership working and increase the availability of PRS accommodation in the district - A high-level strategic group to lobby Government for funds for homelessness and rough sleeping. 	All actions regarding multi-agency working will be achieved over the life of the strategy	Housing Service Manager	✓	✓	✓	✓	Pathway will form parts of Homeless process including intervention work by March 2020. A community hub by March 2021 will rely on existing budgets and recently submitted RSI bid to MHCLG.	Not due to start
1.17	INTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS: Enhance partnership working: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With staff in the planning department to influence permissions so developments meet the needs of the residents of West Berkshire rather than accommodation that has space standards that are more beneficial for transient workers / commuters - Through introducing strategies to meet the housing needs of the younger community to prevent them leaving the district and in so doing boost the local economy of West Berkshire - Through introducing strategies to address the needs of the rural communities in the district who face challenges accessing services which are, in the main, located in Newbury. 	Actions relating to internal partnerships will have been enhanced and implemented	Housing Service Manager	✓	✓	✓	✓	Achieved between March 2021 to 2023 onwards with existing budget allocation and future budget planning.	Not due to start
1.18	Move-on - work in partnership with HSG and key stakeholders to ensure move-on accommodation is achieved to ease issues of blockages in supported housing.	Work in partnership to deliver move-on accommodation will be established	Housing Service Manager		✓			Action to be delivered by March 2023 achieved with existing budget allocation.	Not due to start

No	Actions	Outcomes	Lead	2020/21 Completion	2021/22 Completion	2022/23 Completion	2023 Completion	Comments	Status
Priority Five - Enhance Communication for all client groups									
2	Preventative messages - Improve communication to prevent homelessness by providing information packs for clients ad partnership accessible formats. - Explore targeted information campaign via the internet, social media, local publications and radio	Communication relating to preventative messages will form part of SIP delivery plan	Homelessness Prevention Manager	✓				Achieve by March 2020 via existing budget allocation.	Not due to start
2.1	Accessibility and Access - Improve information that is accessible on the Council's Website (SIP action) - Establish support to address digital exclusion, e.g. better staff training to identify cases where service users may face disadvantage. This could also include partnership with relevant charities - Approach local businesses to assist with funding for the above as part of their Social Value offer, e.g. Veolia and AWE.	Accessibility and Access will form part of SIP delivery plan and the council's website will be updated with comprehensive information. Staff will be fully trained and work in partnership to support and assist service users. Local businesses will be contacted and the outcomes regarding funding delivered.	All Housing Managers	✓				Achieve by March 2020 via existing budget allocation.	Not due to start



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