



Winchester
City Council

**Housing
Services**

Preventing Homelessness Strategy

2014 to 2019

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1. Foreword by Portfolio Holder

Homelessness remains a constant theme in our work and the Council is committed to early intervention and preventing homelessness wherever possible, in partnership with our district wide statutory and non-statutory services. This strategy and supporting documentation clearly sets out the practical ways the Council will achieve this, including the Council's corporate commitment to not use bed and breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and in any event for no longer than six weeks .

As the Council's Housing Strategy points out, "Everyone in the District, no matter who they are or where they live, must have the opportunity to enjoy a good quality of life now and in the future", and an effective Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Action Plan are key tools in helping to deliver that objective.

It is equally important that support is provided to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and excluded members of our community, providing targeted help and support to enable them to prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies.

The character of some parts of the Winchester Town area is affected by high concentrations of privately rented student accommodation and houses in multiple occupations (HMOs). HMOs fulfil an essential role in the District's housing stock; offering a housing solution for students, vulnerable households, young professionals on a limited income and single people aged below 35 years who need help with their rent. This Strategy recognises the need for a range of housing options across tenures and is actively supported and encouraged by its elected members.

Vulnerable and disadvantaged households are particularly at risk of homelessness, and therefore these groups are a particular focus for this Strategy. This might include older people; people with disabilities; rough sleepers and people dealing with challenges such as substance misuse or mental health issues. The Council recognises that it needs to offer a range of housing options services for people to reflect their diverse needs, and is committed to working closely with a wide range of partner agencies to deliver the services needed. In particular the important role of supported housing projects is recognised, as is the need for improved move-on arrangements linked to a pathways approach.

We recognise the need to ensure this Strategy remains up to date and relevant, and will therefore ensure the Strategy is monitored and reviewed on an annual basis, with progress being reported to the Council's Cabinet and a commitment to ensuring homelessness grant continues to be invested in the prevention of homelessness.

Finally, we understand the need for continuous improvement in front line housing services and are delighted to have been one of the first authorities in the country to undertake a peer review and to have achieved a high score, enabling us to now begin to apply for Gold Standard status.

2. Background Information

This is Winchester's third Homelessness Strategy and it comes at a time of considerable change. Whilst welfare reform and reductions in housing benefit place increased pressure on housing services, the Council has an exciting opportunity for the first time in many years to build affordable council housing. We have pledged to undertake the Gold Standard Challenge and Winchester was one of the first local authorities in the Country to participate in the Diagnostic Peer Review process, achieving a peer review score of 68% which allows us to now apply for the 10 local challenges and achieve Gold Standard Status. www.practitionerssupport.org

We are also very proud to report that, due to corporate commitment and the introduction of a proactive front line prevention service detailed below, we have reduced our use of bed and breakfast to nil over the last 2 years, which is a significant achievement given that nationally there has been an increase in the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for the same period. This has not only improved the quality of life of our homeless households: it also reduces the cost to the public purse and allows us to redirect resources to more desirable outcomes.

We recognise the benefits of working in partnership and have accordingly strengthened our links with others who can help us to deliver sustainable housing solutions. We know that as a local housing authority we cannot tackle homelessness alone and so we will continue to build a stronger network of partnerships and services that can be monitored and supported via this Homelessness Strategy's action plan, with partnership being embedded in service level agreements and related protocols/ policies.

Many of the challenges and issues facing us remain outside the direct control of Winchester City Council but this Strategy will build on our partnership working achievements to help deliver solutions. It will prioritise issues and proposed actions to build on our past successes and to mitigate the impacts of social and welfare reform but above all, prevent homelessness.

Winchester District covers some 250 square miles and is a varied District which has the historic City of Winchester, the county town of Hampshire, at its heart. It also contains the thriving business district of Whiteley and numerous market towns and villages dispersed through many miles of countryside. The District also contains part of the South Downs National Park.

The District is home to a population of around 117,000 people. It benefits from a housing stock which is generally of good quality, but housing costs are high, particularly for owner-occupation and private-renting.

There is a severe shortage of affordable housing, and this undoubtedly contributes to levels of housing need and consequent risk of homelessness for some. The

Council's own New Homes programme, together with those being progressed by our Registered Provider partners, offers hope to some, but the supply of social housing for rent will remain well below the levels of demand for the foreseeable future. Increasingly therefore there is a growing dependence upon the private rented sector and the Council is committed to further developing its relationships with private landlords. Accordingly the Action Plan within this Strategy highlights the emphasis being placed upon improving our Private Rented Sector Offer

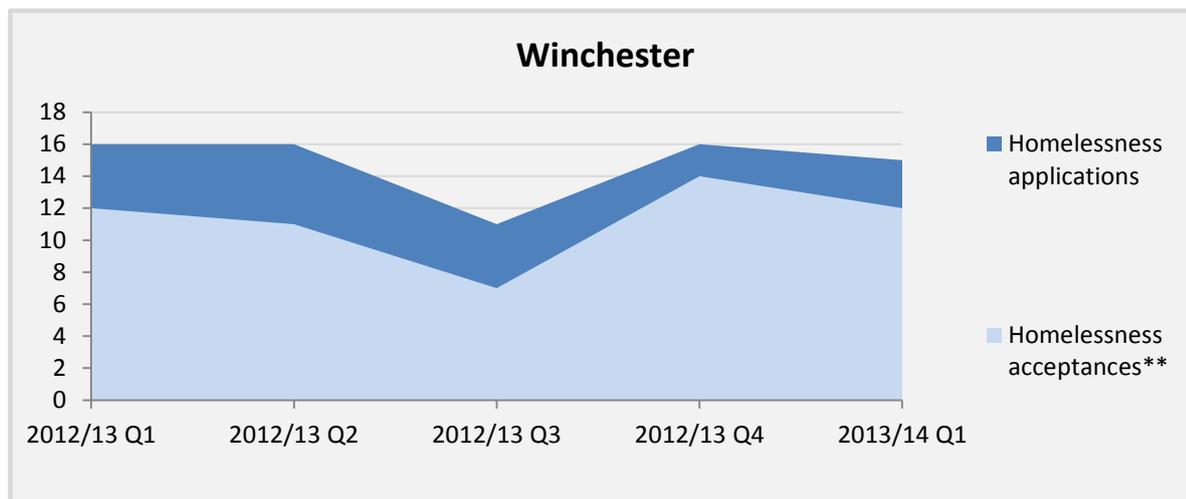
Average District property prices are in excess of £375,000. With average household incomes less than £50,000 per annum across the District an affordability problem becomes evident. Overall, an annual household income of over £63,000 is needed to purchase a home, with significantly higher levels in some parts of the District. This is in excess of average household incomes, and importantly, well in excess of lower quartile incomes of £23,000. In January 2013, the average price of a one bedroom flat in Winchester was £170,000, which would require a prospective purchaser to have an annual income of £39,000. The affordability gap makes home ownership unachievable for many, and so contributes to additional pressure on the private rented sector. This in turn impacts upon availability and upon rent levels.

Between 30 and 45% of households do not have the means to rent a two bedroom property on the open market. This figure rises to 70% for newly formed households. There is competition for rented accommodation between professional people, students and other local households who cannot access social rented housing. Many households therefore find themselves unable to compete effectively in the market place for private rented accommodation without some form of assistance. The current programme of welfare reforms creates further uncertainty over how a number of those facing homelessness might achieve a housing solution which is affordable to them. Similarly, we are facing growing concerns over levels of fuel poverty, which in turn can impact significantly upon housing affordability. There are 2050 housing applicants on the Winchester Housing Register seeking affordable rented accommodation. Of those, approximately 80% of households have an income below £15,000 a year, and increasing the supply of affordable rented housing across all tenures remains a high priority for the Council.

The last housing stock condition survey commissioned by the Council was published in 2008. It concluded that the housing stock in all tenures is generally in very good condition, across all sectors. A new survey is due to take place during 2014 and any relevant findings will be fed into the Action Plan upon its annual review within this Strategy.

3. Update from last strategy

Much has been achieved since the last Homelessness Strategy - we saw a reduction in homelessness acceptances and an increase in homelessness prevention.



We have also maintained a low level of rough sleeping through strong partnership working with our voluntary sector partners. The Council adopted a Private Rented Sector Offer Policy in March 2013. The Private Rented Sector Offer Policy ensures that when a statutory duty exists to a homeless household, this can now also be addressed by placing the household into the private rented sector, thus ensuring that a full safety net is still available to homeless households.

There is also increasing recognition and political support of the need to provide effective housing options for non-statutory homeless people, and the Council has developed a range of measures to improve the service it can offer to 'non-priority' homeless people. These include a frontline comprehensive housing advice service, including direct help where necessary to mediate, negotiate stays etc., the provision of deposit loans and access to Local Welfare Assistance.

An independent review of Winchester City Council homelessness services was initially undertaken by the Government's Specialist Advisor team in April 2012, which led to operational changes to improve the frontline housing options service. The initial recommended changes included introducing a triage service and duty rota system based in the Council's Customer Service Centre, ensuring any households homeless or threatened with homelessness are seen immediately, thus creating better early intervention and prevention opportunities. We introduced an outreach service with the local homelessness day centre and local substance misuse service. We have also been successful in assisting clients who are deemed not in priority need to secure homes in private rented accommodation through match funding with

a number of our partner agencies to resource rent deposits. The outstanding recommendations then informed the consultation and review of homelessness undertaken last year and included later in this Strategy.

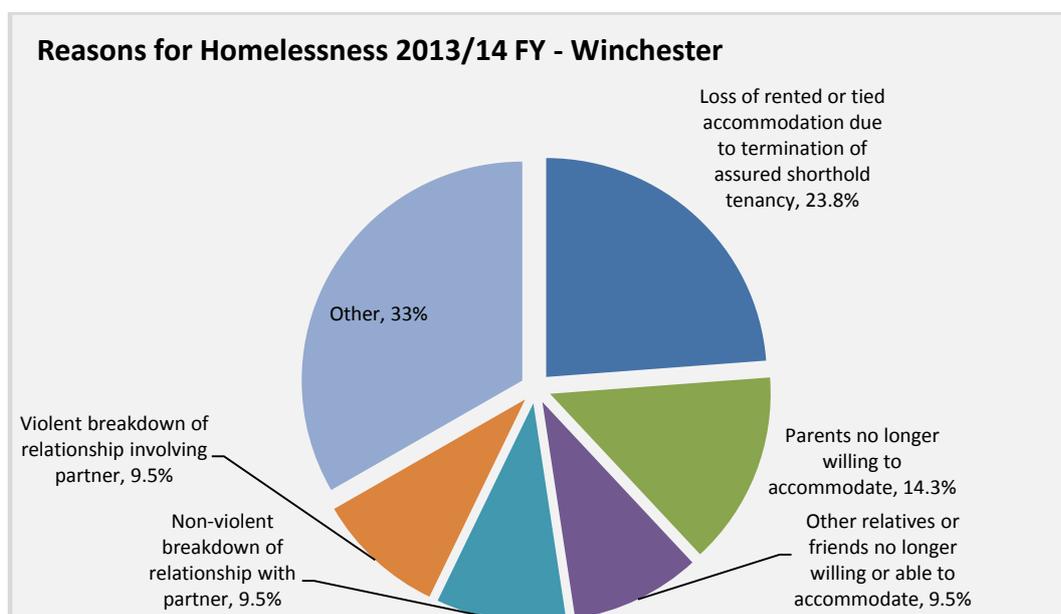
Since 2010 we have funded the Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) for rough sleepers through our direct access provision and this year we have seen a significant reduction in numbers requiring this provision due to successful prevention work with our partner organisations.

We have worked in partnership with Hampshire County Council and supported housing providers to provide move on opportunities for those who are ready to move into independent accommodation. The Council has also signed up to the Hampshire-wide protocol for safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.

Another important development since the previous Strategy was written is that the Council has become an active participant in the North Hampshire Sub-Regional Homelessness Group – a partnership between the district councils in the north of the County. Co-operative working with this Group has given rise to a number of initiatives including a reconnections protocol, and an agreed baseline service offer, and Winchester has piloted an improved way of working effectively with the police and Community Safety Partnership to address rough sleeping and the No Second Night Out agenda.

Despite our achievements, we have in the last year seen an increase in homelessness acceptances, mostly due to a changing economic climate. Of those being accepted as statutory homeless, the main causes remain family or friend evictions, relationship breakdowns or the loss of a private sector tenancy.

The majority of households accepted as homeless are lone, female parents under the age of 30 and single men with complex needs.



The number of people being accepted as homeless had decreased over the previous 2 years to 32 as at 2011/12 and this was achieved through robust homelessness prevention undertaken by the Housing Options Service. However, by the end of 2012/13 acceptances had shown an increase to 44 which could be attributed to changes in housing benefit entitlements and general welfare reform measures.

4. Consultation & Review Process

The achievements and challenges since the last Strategy have clearly shown how the service has moved forward and the benefits of adopting an early intervention approach. To ensure future actions and outcomes are in line with current need, the Council held a consultation and review of homelessness event. The findings of this were aligned with the current statistical data evidence and the peer review results and these gave rise to the future goals and 10 key priorities identified in this Strategy.

The consultation on this Strategy commenced with a multi-agency workshop event in June 2013 which examined the effectiveness of existing approaches to homelessness and highlighted gaps in provision and emerging priorities. Those agencies invited to participate represented a broad range of service users which included entrenched rough sleepers, young homeless people, single homeless households and families with young children, ex-offenders, clients with dependency issues, mental health issues and learning difficulties. The outcomes from this event were then supplemented by responses to follow-up questionnaires, designed to ensure that we had captured as much information and feedback as possible from our wider District partners. The consultation event was held in June 2013 and attended by 50 delegates. The key themes for the event were based around the remaining recommendations from the initial diagnostic assessment carried out by the Specialist Advisor team and the emerging needs of the service;

- Innovative solutions for tackling homelessness and new instances of rough sleeping (Prevention)
- Local strategies and how best to work in partnership (partnership working)
- Initiatives to prevent homelessness including repossessions and evictions
- Targeted services to address entrenched rough sleeping
- Tackling complex needs through a pathways approach
- Access to the private rented sector

The outcomes of the consultation event were then compared with the Peer Review findings and recommendations. The Peer Review was conducted by two other local authorities against a national framework and highlighted areas for improvement across the wider frontline housing service. The review included assessing case file

reviews, shadowing front line interviews, focus groups with partners, assessing the website including contact details and the wider housing options service.

The detail of this consultation event, workshop outcomes, resulting questionnaire, peer review continuous improvement plan and statistical evidence can be found in the Consultation and Review of Homelessness Report on the website with the overarching themes and needs coming from the report being developed into a 'top ten' priorities for consideration across this strategy.

5. Top Priorities for consideration across the strategy

There are considerable challenges for the Council in tackling homelessness and it is recognised that anyone can become homeless at any time. It is recognised nationally that some groups who are most at risk of homelessness include young people leaving the care of a local authority, those leaving prison, people suffering from domestic violence, those with mental health problems, substance misuse, those from troubled families, people on low incomes and those who are in debt. There is a strong overlap between homelessness and social exclusion and increasing pressures on household incomes in the current and future economic climate including welfare reform and household debt.

One of the major challenges is the demand for housing in Winchester which greatly outstrips supply and the district maintains high housing costs, whether for rent or purchase. The Council is committed to addressing housing supply issues, including through tackling empty homes and encouraging those who are under-occupying their homes to downsize. We, as a council, have experienced difficulties in accessing private rented accommodation for homeless and potentially homeless households, especially for those reliant on housing benefit to meet the rental commitments. We recognise the need to actively work with private sector landlords and have taken comprehensive advice from CRISIS, a nationally recognised voluntary organisation that specialises in private sector work, concerning the need to ensure a comprehensive offer is made to both the landlord and tenant when accessing the private rented sector.

It was recognised through the consultation event, our key statistical analysis and Diagnostic Peer Review (results of which are all outlined in the Consultation and Review of Homelessness Report) that we have on-going difficulties with meeting the needs of vulnerable households with specific and complex needs for whom specialist housing and/or support is necessary to enable people to achieve and retain a settled home.

The top 10 priorities for consideration across the strategy.

1. Reducing homelessness caused by family and friend exclusions.
2. Map the current provision and ensure any gaps in services are addressed including providing any bespoke specialist supported accommodation evidenced through this process – e.g. gypsy and traveller, domestic abuse, review the need for accommodation for people with substance dependency issues.
3. Ensure appropriate pathways are in place for bespoke client groups including entrenched rough sleepers, offenders and those with complex needs in partnership with our supporting organisations.
4. Ensuring that homelessness is represented on the District Health and Well Being Partnership Board
5. Ensuring access to the private rented sector is provided, together with on-going support and advice to both the client and the landlord. Specific focus is required on the needs of the under 35s e.g. group-living, HMO's, etc.
6. Exploring and developing social enterprise opportunities in education, training and employment for homelessness households including linking to voluntary sector partners and potential funding opportunities through private finance.
7. Improving our communication methods, better manage client expectations and increase awareness among our partners who are working with potentially homeless clients of the housing options realistically available (including providing this advice in writing to all clients).
8. Developing information, evidence bases and a communications plan with more targeted information about homelessness ensuring information technology options are explored and developed.
9. Ensuring Winchester's homelessness services strive to meet the national Gold Standard Programme including sharing best practice examples.()
10. Map current provision for move on from supported housing accommodation for those who are ready for independent living and ensuring sufficient suitable accommodation is available.

Preventing homelessness goes further than providing the keys to the door, particularly for vulnerable and young people. We need to actively tackle the challenges mentioned above and, with our partners, provide support to help build life skills, independence and the ability to secure and maintain a settled home.

Details of how we will tackle these priorities and other pressures and challenges are contained within the Preventing Homelessness Strategy Action Plan. The Action Plan sets out clear tasks, expected outcomes, timescales and lead responsibilities. The key priorities and challenges have culminated in the three overarching goals for Winchester listed below.

6. Goals

1. Provision of appropriate housing advice and support to all households facing homelessness irrespective of statutory need
2. Prevention of homelessness through effective partnership working
3. Develop services in line with the Gold Standard Programme to address homelessness – details at Section 7 below clearly show the challenges that we think we have already met or are close to meeting with a focus on achieving the remaining challenges that align to our top ten priority areas

7. The Council's Commitment to achieving Gold Standard Challenges

In 2012, the Ministerial Working Group on Homelessness published its second report: *Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to the Prevention of Homelessness* which contained Ten Local Authority Challenges (Gold standard programme).

The Council is committed to achieving Gold Standard and the Gold Standard is identified as one of our ten local priorities, local priority 9.

The Council has demonstrated its commitment to these priorities in part by acting as the host authority to the DCLG funded National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS). This service was set up in 2013 specifically to support local authorities to improve their early intervention and prevention housing options services.

The NPSS has developed a 10 step continuous improvement approach that starts with a pledge for local authorities aspiring to 'strive for continuous improvement in front line housing services' and culminates in an application for the Gold Standard Challenge. We have completed steps 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 and 8 and will be participating in steps 4, 5 and 9 as they develop, with the intention of applying for the 10 challenges in due course.

We are committed to tackling the Gold Standard Challenge and, as stated previously, are part of a Peer Review group with two neighbouring authorities which is helping to inform us about any gaps or shortcomings in our homelessness prevention services alongside the additional statistical data and consultation outcomes, which will enable us to identify best practice to help improve what we do in Winchester. The results of both the statistical analysis and Peer Review have helped form the basis of this strategy. As shown below, we have considered which challenges we still have to achieve and what works has already been completed in advance of any applications.

The 'Gold Standard' Challenges

1. To adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local authority services

There is a clear commitment from elected members, voluntary sector partners and senior officers to tackling homelessness and enthusiasm from Senior Management in tackling the Gold Standard Challenges. – An application for this challenge will be submitted in due course

2. To actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs

The Council provides financial support to a number of voluntary sector organisations who provide services in these areas, as well as offering practical help and support - it is recognised that further work for complex needs clients and rough sleepers is required to meet this challenge and this is reflected in the Action Plan

3. To offer a Housing Options prevention service to all clients including written advice

The introduction of a triage service in the Customer Service Centre ensures that all customers have access to housing advice at the time they need it, with home visits or surgery visits being carried out when needed. A duty rota is also in place and advice and assistance (always confirmed in writing) is offered to all clients irrespective of statutory needs – an application for this challenge will be applied for in due course

4. To adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective local alternative

The Council has already signed a North Hampshire NSNO agreement and appointed an outreach worker to work across the agencies in Winchester to prevent rough sleeping. The Council will further develop its response to the national No Second Night Out agenda by developing effective partnerships with relevant agencies, committing staff resources to the initiative and identifying bed spaces which can be made available to assist people off the streets through a joined up task and targeting approach via the supported housing panel – it is recognised that further work is required to meet this challenge and this is reflected in the Action Plan.

5. To have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that include appropriate accommodation and support

Work has started working with key partners on developing effective pathways, including ensuring key senior officers attend relevant forums and meetings, with the intention of introducing a full pathways approach across all supported

accommodation to ensure best use of stock, monitoring of voids and clear pathways for clients - it is recognised that further work is required to meet this challenge and this is reflected in the Action Plan

6. To develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both client and landlord

The Council received support from CRISIS during 2012/13 to develop its work with private landlords to improve access to the sector - it is recognised that further work is required to meet this challenge and this is reflected in the Action Plan

7. To actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions

The Council receives notifications on all court hearings and contacts all households offering support and advice. This includes exploring forbearance tools with lenders, referring to debt advice, liaising with court desk services and where necessary referring to the NHAS bespoke mortgage repossession team this has resulted in a decrease in possessions over the last financial year - it is recognised however that further work is required to meet this challenge and this is reflected in the Action Plan.

8. To have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually to be responsive to emerging needs

This Strategy emphasises that priority should be given to preventing homelessness through early intervention and prevention wherever possible, with any gaps in provision highlighted via the review being addressed in the action plan. It is also recognised that the Strategy needs to be a living document and it will therefore be reviewed on annual basis to ensure it remains live and up to date - an application for this challenge will be applied for in due course.

9. To not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in Bed and Breakfast accommodation

The Council is very clear that bed and breakfast accommodation will only ever be used in an emergency and for no longer than six weeks. We are very pleased to report that we are not placing any young people in Bed and Breakfast and we will continue to monitor this in line with the changes to our front line service to ensure it is sustained – an application for this challenge will be applied for in due course

10. To not place any families in Bed and Breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and for no longer than 6 weeks

The Council is very clear that bed and breakfast accommodation will only ever be used in an emergency and for no longer than six weeks. We are very pleased to report that we are not placing families in Bed and Breakfast and we will continue to monitor this in line with the changes to our front line service to ensure it is sustained – an application for this challenge will be applied for in due course.

8. Links to other Strategies and related Policies

This Strategy should be considered in the context of a range of other housing strategies and policies which are inter-dependent.



WCC Housing Strategy 2013/14 – 2018/19

There are many forces at play in the housing market and wider economy and the Strategy cannot solve all the problems we face so it will focus primarily on vulnerable and excluded households.

We need to plan to make the best use of the housing we already have. We must also make sure that our existing homes remain of a high standard and that those who aren't satisfactorily housed, particularly the vulnerable and excluded, are supported.

The Winchester Housing Strategy Priorities (listed below) have significance for the objectives of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy:

1. To maximise the supply of high quality affordable housing in urban and rural areas
2. To improve the housing circumstances of vulnerable and excluded households
3. Supporting local people accessing high quality and affordable housing which meet their needs
4. To make best use of housing
5. To support our residents

A key objective under Priority 2 is to "Develop a Homelessness Strategy to prevent and reduce homelessness and to help homeless households secure accommodation to meet their needs"

WCC Housing Development Strategy 2013/14 – 2018/19

The Council has developed a new homes building programme which is specifically focussed upon providing housing for those in greatest need. The Strategy states: - "Our primary objective is to provide new homes for those on the housing waiting register. In particular we will, wherever possible, create new homes that are suited to those with particular needs which are not currently being met by existing stock or through other new provision. By this more specific targeting of housing need we aim not only to provide housing which might not otherwise be available but also to 'free up' housing suitable for people with no specific requirement other than affordability".

Winchester District Community Strategy 2010 – 2020

The Winchester District Community Strategy sets out the way that Winchester City Council and its partners would like the Winchester District to change for the better over the course of the current decade. It also seeks to identify the issues we want to address to help make this vision a reality – barriers, threats and opportunities alike.

Our vision for the Winchester District is of diverse and dynamic communities, where people work together to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to lead a fulfilling

life now and in the future. The most applicable aims when thinking about preventing homelessness are:

- 'providing support when and where it is most effective to our vulnerable and disadvantaged residents'
- 'ensuring housing is available to meet the diverse needs of our communities, including an adequate provision of affordable housing'
- 'helping people to make positive changes to their lifestyles for better physical and mental health'

WCC Tenancy Strategy 2013-18

The Preventing Homelessness Strategy has a strong and clear allegiance with the Tenancy Strategy which clearly sets out and identifies the approach all providers of social housing are encouraged to adopt in granting, managing and maintaining tenancies in the District. Homelessness prevention is one of the key issues identified which Registered Providers should consider when deciding whether or not to renew a fixed-term tenancy. It also makes it very clear that 'when fixed term tenancies are coming to an end it is essential that the tenant is given sufficient notice so that they can seek advice about their options. As such, we expect notice to be served no less than 6 months before the tenancy is due to end, and for the Council to be provided with a copy of the notice'. There is a clear emphasis upon tenants being given the time and the support necessary to identify a suitable housing arrangement.

The Strategy also states that the Council 'expects registered providers to ensure that rents fall within Local Housing Allowance rates and that larger dwellings in high value areas remain affordable, taking into account disposable income levels and changes to the welfare benefit system'.

The Allocation Policy/Private Rented Sector Offer Policy

This Strategy has had regard to the Allocations Policy in its development and the Allocations Policy supports the priorities of this Strategy stated in the Localism Act 2011 s153 by ensuring any accepted homelessness household is recognised and supported through the scheme with appropriate priority status.

The Localism Act 2011 also allowed local authorities the flexibility to fully discharge their duty to secure accommodation for homeless households through an offer of suitable accommodation in the private sector. The Council adopted the policy change in November 2012. The Act also gave the freedom to local authorities to decide whether to continue to operate an open waiting list or introduce local eligibility criteria for qualification to the housing register. The Council opted in April 2013 to introduce a local eligible criteria of 1 year's residency for eligibility to join the housing register, prioritising local people for local social housing, whilst recognising in the Private Rented Sector Offer Policy that the accepted statutory duty to all homeless

households can now also be addressed and discharged into the private rented sector, thus ensuring a full safety net is still available to homeless households.

Affordable Housing SPD – Adopted February 2008 (Amended 2010)

The Supplementary Planning Document deals with sustainable housing development and recognises the link with the Homelessness Strategy, seeking to reduce and prevent homelessness within the community through understanding the causes and preparing specific courses of action.

Policy 7 of the SPD states: ‘affordable housing should be reserved for households identified as being in housing need and registered on one of the Council’s housing registers or a register, such as the Zone Agent’s register, approved by them. Nominations will be made by the Council from those registers’.

Further information on the linked strategies can be found at:
www.winchester.gov.uk/housing/housing-strategies/

9. Resources

A significant amount of funding is spent on the prevention of homelessness in Winchester.

Homelessness Grant Funding Streams

The DCLG grant for 2013/14 (net of additional sums for the costs of NPSS) was £115,470 but even though this funding is not guaranteed in the future, Winchester City Council have made a clear commitment to spend this funding on preventing homelessness for the life of the grant. A separate committee report is produced on an annual basis covering the homelessness grant, including budget details. This can be found on the website www.winchester.gov.uk.

Our partners also provide services for homeless people and those at risk of homelessness, which provides additional resources not accounted for above, currently including Hampshire County Council funding, Local Welfare Assistance fund, floating support services and third sector resources.

With less public resources generally available, we know we need to continue to redesign our services around the need of our clients and work better with our partner organisations as highlighted in the homelessness review report and actions below. We also need to fully explore potential and alternative match funding opportunities to achieve new and better ways of funding and delivering good quality housing services, recognising the current County proposal to reduce the wider funding

available to housing support services. We will target funds to projects that meet our strategic priorities and assess the outcomes of funded project to ensure on-going provision meets the strategic aims of the District.

10. Monitoring and Review

This Strategy is for a five year term, but it will need to be responsive to change so will be monitored and reviewed annually to ensure all actions and strategic aims remain relevant to prevailing conditions and best practice in the homelessness and housing advice sector.

This Strategy is a working document and will be monitored, owned and led on by District partners across individual specialist areas, with the Council taking overall responsibility for any amendments or updates via an agreed forum. The Council will continue to consult on the effectiveness of our District-wide homelessness prevention measures through a number of means, including through the various forums in place in the District such as Supported Housing Panel, Housing Board and the Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board. The Council will also ensure the annual service plan for the housing options/private rented sector team align themselves to the more detailed actions required as a direct result of the consultation, peer review and statistical analysis of the district.

11. Publication

A copy of this Strategy is available on the Council's website and is available on request at the Council's offices. A paper copy can also be provided upon request.

If you would like more information regarding the Preventing Homelessness Strategy, contact Housing Services.

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Email: housing@winchester.gov.uk
Website: www.winchester.gov.uk

The Homelessness Strategy is a working document and will be monitored, owned and lead on by District partners across individual specialist areas, with the Council taking overall responsibility for any amendments or updates via an agreed forum responsible for monitoring this Action Plan.

The Council will continue to consult on the effectiveness of our District-wide homelessness prevention measures through a number of means, including through the various forums in place in the District such as Supported Housing Panel, Housing Board and the Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board.

The Council will also ensure the annual service plan for the Housing Options/Private Rented Sector Team align themselves to the more detailed actions required.

This Action Plan covers the wider strategic priorities with the expectation that the operational delivery of some of the wider actions will be delivered from within the housing options service.

Goals:

1. Provision of appropriate housing advice and support to all households facing homelessness irrespective of statutory need
2. Prevention of homelessness through effective partnership working
3. Develop services in line with the 10 Local Challenges to address homelessness – details below clearly show the challenges that we think we have already met or are close to meeting with a focus on achieving the remaining challenges that align to our top ten priority areas

Introduce a Homelessness Forum to assist in monitoring and delivering the actions below

When will we do it by?	Who will monitor this and who will deliver this?	Resources needed	Tasks/Steps	Target	Outcome
July 2014	Forum to appoint	Officer time	To become a focus for identifying and managing the impact of changes upon Winchester residents and service users. Monitor each action and ensure delivery	Quarterly Homelessness Forum updating outcomes and reviewing actions	Homelessness Forum monitoring the Preventing Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

1. Reducing homelessness caused by family and friend exclusions.

When will we do it by?	Who will monitor this and who will deliver this?	Resources needed	Tasks/Steps	Target	Outcome
Year 1 – 5	Housing Options Manager	Existing resources	Raise awareness of the realities of homelessness with schools and colleges by recording data and feeding into visits with schools/colleges	Record appropriate data and visit schools and colleges (including lesson plan)	Reduction in applications from lone female parents under the age of 30 and/or increase in relieved homelessness being recorded
Year 1 – 5	Housing Options Manager	Existing resources	Link into Corporate Troubled Families initiative	Identify named lead and joint working policy/ referral process	Reduction in family evictions and success of families within the scheme – joint working
Year 1 – 5	Housing Options Manager	Existing resources	Re-launch and refresh working protocol with Children’s Services including joint assessments	Re-establish working relationship and links with Children’s Services – Hampshire County Council commissioning services	Reduction in 16/17 year homeless approaches and improve joint working practices

2. Map the current provision and ensure any gaps in services are addressed including providing any bespoke specialist supported accommodation and bespoke support evidenced through this process – e.g. gypsy and traveller, offenders, domestic abuse, mental health, review the need for provision for people with substance dependencies

When will we do it by?	Who will monitor this and who will deliver this?	Resources needed	Tasks/Steps	Target	Outcome
December 2014	Homelessness Forum	IT system & officer time	Map the current provision, determine gaps and produce directory of all services and provision in the District preventing duplication and prioritising gaps in service	Link to live directory on website with mapped services	Clear concise information for all service users and providers – aligned services
July 2014	Housing Options Team	Officer time	Attend Domestic Violence Forum and provide outreach services	Regular attendee on DV forum and provide appropriate outreach service	Increase in preventions/ decrease in applications – tailored bespoke services
September 2014	Homelessness Forum	Officer time	Joint working protocol with Winchester Prison/YOT/Probation to reduce crisis approaches from offenders	Planned move-on from prisons	Reduction in statutory homelessness and reactive Temporary Accommodation places

September 14	Homelessness Forum (inc. HCC commissioners)	Officer time	Analyse data for mental health clients to ensure appropriate measures are in place to prevent homelessness	Implement a joint working protocol and establish a working relationship and links with Hampshire County Council commissioning services	Reducing crisis approaches and homelessness applications
March 15	Homelessness Forum (inc. Health)	Officer time	Agree joint hospital discharge policy	Attend hospital discharge team meetings and agree joint working protocol	Reducing crisis approaches and planned move on from hospital –reduce homelessness applications
Year 1-5	Homelessness Forum (inc Armed Forces Personnel)	Officer time	Ensure housing advice and assistance measures align to the principals of the Armed Forces Community Covenant	Work in partnership with Armed Forces personnel to better support the Armed Forces community though bespoke information and advice on housing options.	Reduce homelessness amongst serving members of the Armed Forces, veterans & their families.

3. Ensure appropriate pathways are in place for bespoke client groups including entrenched rough sleepers, offenders and those with complex needs in partnership with our supporting organisations.

When will we do it by?	Who will monitor this and who will deliver this?	Resources needed	Tasks/Steps	Target	Outcome
July 2014	Homelessness Forum & North Hants Sub-regional Group	Specialist Officer time	Map current provision and determine/agree bespoke pathways required – linked to mapping provision above	Implement pathways models across bespoke services in agreement with voluntary sector partners	Minimise statutory homelessness acceptances through prevention work
March 2015	Homelessness Forum	Officer time	Align pathways and approach to an agreed single service offer across all agencies	Introduce a policy and procedure guidance for partners including regular briefing updates – apply Gold Standard 5	Achieving Gold Standard Challenge 5
September 2014	Housing Options Service / Homelessness Forum	Agreement needed to replace Supported Housing Panel – resources still to be determined	Ensure all supported accommodation is delivered and agreed via a single panel/hub approach	Maintain a supported housing panel approach for sharing of information and joined up approach across single homelessness delivery	Planned move on from supported projects, reducing evictions, making best use of supported vacancies
November 2014	Homeless Link	Officer & partner agency time	Plan and agree annual rough sleeper count	Work in partnership with voluntary sector to gather intelligence and inform a robust count/estimate	Reduction in rough sleeping in line with other actions (NSNO)

July 2014	Homelessness Forum	Meeting time	Introduce a task and targeting group for rough sleepers and other returning homeless clients	Identify relevant partners to develop a task and targeting group	Reduction of applications from single men with complex needs and/or relieved homelessness being recorded
July 2014	Rough Sleepers Task & Targeting Group	Officer time	Introduce a No Second Night Out joint working protocol to link to single service offer below	Agree and implement a policy and procedure providing a NSNO provision across the district - Application for Gold Standard Challenge 4	Achieving Gold Standard Challenge 4
September 2014	North Hants Sub-regional group	Housing Options Manager	Monitor the effectiveness of the re-connection policy	Attendance at the North Hants sub-regional meeting	Ensure services meet local need

4. Ensure that homelessness is represented on the District Health and Well Being Partnership Board

When will we do it by?	Who will monitor this and who will deliver this?	Resources needed	Tasks/Steps	Target	Outcome
April 2014	Housing Options Manager	Officer time	To ensure housing is represented on the Health and Well Being Partnership Board	Link into wider funding and resource provisions of the Board to support a preventative approach across the District	Reduce health inequalities and improve working relationships with health professionals to improve customer journey (Making Every Contact Count)

5. Ensuring access to the private rented sector is provided with on going support and advice to both the client and the landlord – ensuring implications for under 35s are explored – e.g. group living, HMOs etc.

When will we do it by?	Who will monitor this and who will deliver this?	Resources needed	Tasks/Steps	Target	Outcome
September 2014	Housing Options Manager / Private Rented Sector Team Leader	Homelessness Prevention Fund for Landlord incentives	Review and improve the Private Rented Sector offer	Produce an action plan for delivery including reviewing the current 'cash' bond scheme (linking to PRS strategy on Empty Homes, quality of stock, PRSO policy, CBL advertising website) Application for Gold Standard Challenge 6	Having a suitable affordable Private Rented Sector Option - Achieving Gold Standard Challenge 6
Year 1 - 5	Housing Options Team / Private Sector Team	Housing Advice Hours	Ensure every effort is made to sustain existing accommodation where appropriate and safe to do so	Providing support to both landlords and tenants to sustain existing accommodation options	Reductions in end of AST's and reducing homelessness application
October 2014	Private Sector Housing Team Leader	Officer time to develop and to attend meetings	Develop a landlords' forum	Advertise, promote and manage a fully inclusive landlords forum	Improve communications with landlords and the supply of PRS stock available to housing clients

September 2014	Private Sector Housing Team	Officer time and promotional materials	Develop the landlord offer	Publish a policy and procedure clearly outlining the landlord incentives, training and support	Reduction in homelessness and joint working across the private sector
September 2014	Housing Options Team	Officer time and training costs	Develop the tenant offer	Publish a policy and procedure clearly outlining the tenant incentives, training and support	Reduction in homelessness and sustaining appropriate tenancies
Year 1 - 5	Housing Services	HRA / Homelessness Prevention funding	Pilot for shared accommodation for under 35's within the PRS	Secure appropriate PRS accommodation for this client group	Reduction in applications by providing affordable sustainable accommodation for under 35's

6. Exploring and developing social enterprise opportunities in education, training and employment for homelessness households including linking to voluntary sector partners and funding opportunities through private finance

When will we do it by?	Who will monitor this and who will deliver this?	Resources needed	Tasks/Steps	Target	Outcome
Year 1 - 5	Housing Options Manager in partnership with Temporary Accommodation service and wider partners	Potential for match-funding opportunities, private finance and delivery led by key partners	Develop social enterprise opportunities	Explore possible social enterprise opportunities alongside internal and external statutory and non statutory partners	Addressing worklessness and reducing welfare reform impact across tenures
March 2015	Homelessness Forum via Task & Targeting Group (Worklessness, Education & Training) involving relevant stakeholders	Potential for match-funding opportunities, private finance and delivery led by key partners	Map current provision of education, training and employment opportunities across the District, filling gaps in provision	Working in partnership to maximise funding, and resources to increase education, training and employment opportunities for Homeless Households. Apply for Gold Standard Challenge 2	Achieving Gold Standard Challenge 2

7. Improving our communication methods and better manage client expectations. Increase awareness among our partners who work with potentially homeless households, of the housing options realistically available.

When will we do it by?	Who will monitor this and who will deliver this?	Resources needed	Tasks/Steps	Target	Outcome
March 2015	Housing Options Manager	IT System & officer time	Evaluate the effectiveness of outreach surgeries including mapping data and outcomes	Determine future needs for outreach provision to ensure appropriate and relevant services provided - Application for Gold Standard Challenge 3	Ensuring all households can access the Housing Options services and reducing duplication - Achieving Gold Standard Challenge 3
Year 1 - 5	Housing Options Team & service managers	Officer time	Attend internal and external partner meetings	Regular named officer attending meetings	Improved communication and strategic alignment of services
Year 1 - 5	Housing Options Team, service managers & partners	Officer & partner agency time.	Identify the underlying factors that lead to homelessness	Target available resources to needs identified across the district	Reduction in approaches and informs prevention work
Year 1 - 5	Private Sector Housing Team	Existing DF Grants	Include information on Disabled Facilities Grants as part of prevention options	Supporting households to sustain current accommodation	Reduction in homeless approaches
July 2014	Business Services Team	Support officer time	Explore mechanisms to capture customer feedback from a hard reach group	Introduce a customer feedback framework and monitoring tool	To ensure clients' views influence future service delivery

8. Developing information, evidence bases with more targeted information about homelessness ensuring information technology options are explored and developed

When will we do it by?	Who will monitor this and who will deliver this?	Resources needed	Tasks/Steps	Target	Outcome
March 2015	Housing Options Manager & Project Co-ordinator	IT system. Officer time	Ensure all data is recorded across the service via the appropriate I.T systems, providing a client profile.	Meetings with internal managers allowing future trends and blockages to be monitored and reviewed concerning future homelessness approaches; NFA; Shared accommodation; unaffordable housing etc.	Reduction in homelessness and sustainment of current accommodation
Year 1 - 5	Business Services & Housing Options Team	Resources for website development	Promote and develop debt advice where needed including self help tools	Explore I.T systems and council website provision	Reduction in homelessness and sustainment of current accommodation through clients making informed decisions
Year 1 - 5	Housing Options Team	Homelessness Prevention Budget	Ensure housing options are available to current tenants to sustain their accommodation including income maximisation, downsizing/overcrowding options	Promoting the preventative toolkit across all tenants and working with landlords to prevent evictions where possible	Reduction in Registered Provider and Council evictions



October 2014	Housing Options Manager & frontline team	Meeting time	Introduce a pre-eviction protocol with district RPs and WCC Housing Management	Implement a pre-eviction policy and referral process	Reduction in crisis presentations and increased opportunities for prevention
July 2014	Service Managers	Portfolio Holder & Officer time.	Promote the prevention agenda and ensure all council staff, members and partners are fully updated and informed	Provide regular briefings and training sessions. Better signposting of services and providing information packs for customers and wider staff	Joined up approach to preventing homelessness across the District and ensuring buy-in across all agencies
Year 1 - 3	Welfare Reform Group & key partner agencies	Officer time	Monitor impact of welfare reform and universal credit	Link in to current wider Council work plan and incentive ensuring impact is minimised	Reduction in evictions and debt

9. Ensuring Winchester's homelessness services strive to meet the national Gold Standard Programme (10 local challenges) including sharing best practice examples

When will we do it by?	Who will monitor this and who will deliver this?	Resources needed	Tasks/Steps	Target	Outcome
March 2015	National Practitioner Support Service	Current resources and Homelessness Prevention Grant	Review the service against the 10 challenges to ensure all challenges can be achieved	Application for all Gold Standard Challenges	Gold Standard Authority
March 2015	Housing Options Team	Current Resources and Homelessness Prevention Grant	Ensure appropriate advice and assistance to all home owners is continued in light of the end of the mortgage rescue scheme	All forbearance tools are explored, money advice is provided, self help tools in place, court desk provision links to wider housing options services	Reduction in repossessions (Gold Standard 7)
Year 1 - 5	Service Managers & Homelessness Forum	DHP/DWP, Local Welfare Assistance, one off grant payments from prevention funds.	Ensure all wider homelessness prevention grants and resources are being used to prevent homelessness	Monitor and review service delivery ensuring funding is aligned to prevention with appropriate service level agreements in place to monitor external spend	Achieving joint outcomes and best use of funds

October 2015	Service Managers	HRA Capital / Revenue funding	Review the current temporary accommodation and produce a TA supply and demand model	Introduce a TA strategy based on a supply and demand model	No further increase in average length of stay in TA TA fit for purpose No B&B usage
Year 1 - 5	Service Managers & Housing Options Team	Officer time	Share best practice at County and Regional events	Attend all County and Regional events with LA partners and wider stakeholders	Best practice approach adopted and aligned to wider services

10. Map current provision for move-on from supported housing for those who are ready for independent living and ensuring sufficient suitable accommodation is available.

When will we do it by?	Who will monitor this and who will deliver this?	Resources needed	Tasks/Steps	Target	Outcome
Year 1-5	Housing Options Manager and all providers		Map provision ensuring mechanisms are in place for appropriate moves on into independent living across all tenures	Agree with partners at the Supported Housing Forum an updated SLA to cover all move-on, placements, pre-eviction protocol process, abandonments, and referrals – linked to hub and mapping of services approach above	SLA in place and working across the District including all partners