

CABINET
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HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY
2014 - 2016

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Howard Doe, Housing and Community Services

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Summary

The Draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy sets out how Medway Council, in partnership with stakeholders, will tackle and prevent homelessness. The Strategy will influence services, which contribute to preventing homelessness, such as education and health. It is a flexible strategy through to 2016 but will be regularly reviewed to ensure it remains relevant.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 The Draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy, at Appendix 1, is consistent with and sets out the Council's contribution to the Council Plan in respect of tackling and preventing homelessness and is in line with the Council's budgetary framework. Approval of this strategy is therefore a matter for Cabinet.

2. Background

2.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory obligation on local authorities to undertake a review of homelessness in their area and, based on the findings, to develop and publish a strategy to tackle and prevent homelessness at least every five years.

2.2 The Strategy has been developed in a challenging climate. Individually factors such as the economy, unemployment, the welfare system and difficult housing market conditions can disproportionately affect vulnerable people and increase the risk of homelessness.

2.3 The Strategy recognises that homelessness is a complex problem with multiple causes requiring flexible solutions and the delivery of innovative services in order to reach the increasing number of people affected.

3. Options

Option 1 – Adopt the Homelessness Prevention Strategy

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires the Local Authority to review and produce a new Homelessness Strategy every five years. The Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2014-16 sets out reasons for, and the ways in which, Medway Council and its partners will achieve its key objectives in tackling homelessness. Medway Council has a legal duty to have a current strategy that deals with homelessness.

Option 2 – Do not adopt the Homelessness Prevention Strategy

Not adopting the Strategy would mean that the Council would not meet their statutory duty and would not have a current strategic framework in which to deal with homelessness.

4. Advice and analysis

4.1 The Strategy has been developed based upon consideration of:-

- The national, regional and local context
- A comprehensive review of homelessness services
- Consultation and needs analysis.

The review and consultation process has helped to inform the strategic aims and detailed action plans.

4.2 The Strategy has four aims:

- Integrated early intervention to prevent homelessness before crisis point is reached
- Timely and accessible housing information available, enabling people to make informed housing decisions and plan ahead
- A supply of and fair access to accommodation to meet housing needs
- Access to services to help people with housing support needs sustain independent living.

4.3 Sitting underneath each objective are a number of actions, which will feed into the monitoring regime for the Strategy.

4.4 The production and delivery the Strategy is the statutory responsibility of a local authority. However, partnership working underpins the delivery of the priorities and actions. The Homelessness Forum has been a major partner in the development of this strategy.

4.5 The Strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it remains relevant.

5. Risk management

- 5.1 The primary risk and influencing factors are set out within the Strategy. The Strategy will be subject to quarterly review and monitoring, with key identified risks including:-

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
Changes to the environment in which the strategy operates	Possible impact on service demand, funding and opportunities for intervention	Action Plan reviewed quarterly through the Homelessness Forum, with action being taken to mitigate risk
No up to date Homelessness Prevention Strategy in place	Medway Council has a legal duty to publish the new Homelessness Strategy in 2014	The adoption of this Strategy would allow the Council to continue to meet this duty

6. Consultation and Equality

- 6.1 The views of stakeholders have significantly contributed to the development of the Strategy. A number of service areas were visited to hold specifically focused one-to-one and group feedback sessions with providers and service users. We conducted an online survey to capture the views and opinions of frontline staff and partner agencies.
- 6.2 A workshop was held with providers, which took the form of an Appreciative Inquiry event. The strength-based approach focused on identifying positive practice and building a shared vision for the future. Delegates identified what was currently working before talking about what the service should look like and way that this "ideal" could be achieved.
- 6.3 In adopting the Homelessness Prevention Strategy, the Council is exercising a public function and must therefore comply with the duties in section 149 Equality Act 2010 to have 'due regard' to the matters set out in relation to equalities. Accordingly due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality, and foster good relations between those with a protected characteristic (pregnancy and maternity, age discrimination, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it must form an integral part of the decision making process in relation to the formulation and adoption of the Strategy. A Diversity Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached at Appendix 2. This indicates that a fuller Diversity Impact Assessment is not necessary.

7. Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 7.1 The Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee will consider this report on 4 February 2014. The views of the Committee will be submitted to Cabinet in an addendum report.

8. Financial and legal implications

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications as regards to the Draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy. The strategy will primarily be delivered within existing resources or in some cases will be used to provide background and supporting evidence in bidding for external resources. The investment however in preventing homeless and dealing efficiently, effectively and equitably with those effected is more effective and cost effective than purely dealing with those who are at appoint of crisis.
- 8.2 Section 1(1) of the Homelessness Act 2002 gives housing authorities the power to carry out a homelessness review for their area and formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of the review. This power can be exercised from time to time. Section 3 of the 2002 Act defines a “homelessness strategy” as a strategy formulated by a local housing authority for preventing homelessness in their area, securing that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people in their area who are or may become homeless, securing the satisfactory provision of support for people in their area who are or may become homeless; or who have been homeless and need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.
- 8.3 Section 1(4) requires housing authorities to publish a new homelessness strategy, based on the results of a further homelessness review, within the period of five years beginning with the day on which their last homelessness strategy was published. However, it is open to a housing authority to conduct homelessness reviews and strategies more frequently, if they wish.

9. Recommendations

- 8.1 It is recommended that Members approve the Homelessness Prevention Strategy and support the actions set out in the Action Plan.

9. Suggested reasons for decision(s)

- 9.1 The recommendation is suggested for approval to:-
- Comply with Section 1 of the Homelessness Act 2002 that the Council have a Homelessness Prevention Strategy.
 - The Strategy and Action Plan has been developed in consultation with key stakeholders and priority actions have been identified to support the Strategy.

Background papers:

Draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2014-16

Homelessness Changes in the Localism Act 2011: supplementary guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-changes-in-the-localism-act-2011-supplementary-guidance>

Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (2006)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-councils-july-2006>

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Medway Council

Homelessness Prevention Strategy

2014-16

Introduction

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a statutory obligation on all local authorities to undertake a review of homelessness in their area and, based on the findings of this review, to develop and publish a strategy to tackle and prevent homelessness at least every five years. Medway Council's Housing Strategy was published in October 2011 and contained details of how we would deal with the housing needs of residents in Medway, including preventing homelessness and supporting those affected by the associated issues. However, in the light of the recent legislative changes and the wider social and economic environment, we have decided to review our approach to preventing homelessness and to develop an updated Homelessness Prevention Strategy.

Many people face issues that can lead to homelessness, such as a relationship breakdown or end of a tenancy. In most cases individuals are able to cope and find suitable accommodation using their own resources. However, for others these experiences can trigger homelessness, either because they might lack the resources to tackle their immediate challenges or because there are more underlying issues, which make it harder for them to deal with their situation.

This strategy sets out how vulnerable individuals at risk of homelessness will be spotted earlier and how we will work to tackle the underlying causes of homelessness so that we can try and prevent people reaching crisis point. Locally integrated services will be available to step in when things do go wrong and those that do become homeless will have a better chance of rebuilding their lives.

Medway's Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2014-16 has been developed in a challenging climate. We know that individually factors such as the economic climate, high levels of unemployment, changes to the welfare benefit system and difficult housing market conditions can disproportionately affect vulnerable people and increase the risk of homelessness. This strategy recognises that homelessness is a complex problem with multiple causes requiring flexible solutions and the delivery of innovative services in order to reach the increasing number of people affected. The strategy has therefore identified four key priorities to respond to these issues:

Integrated early intervention to prevent homelessness before crisis point is reached

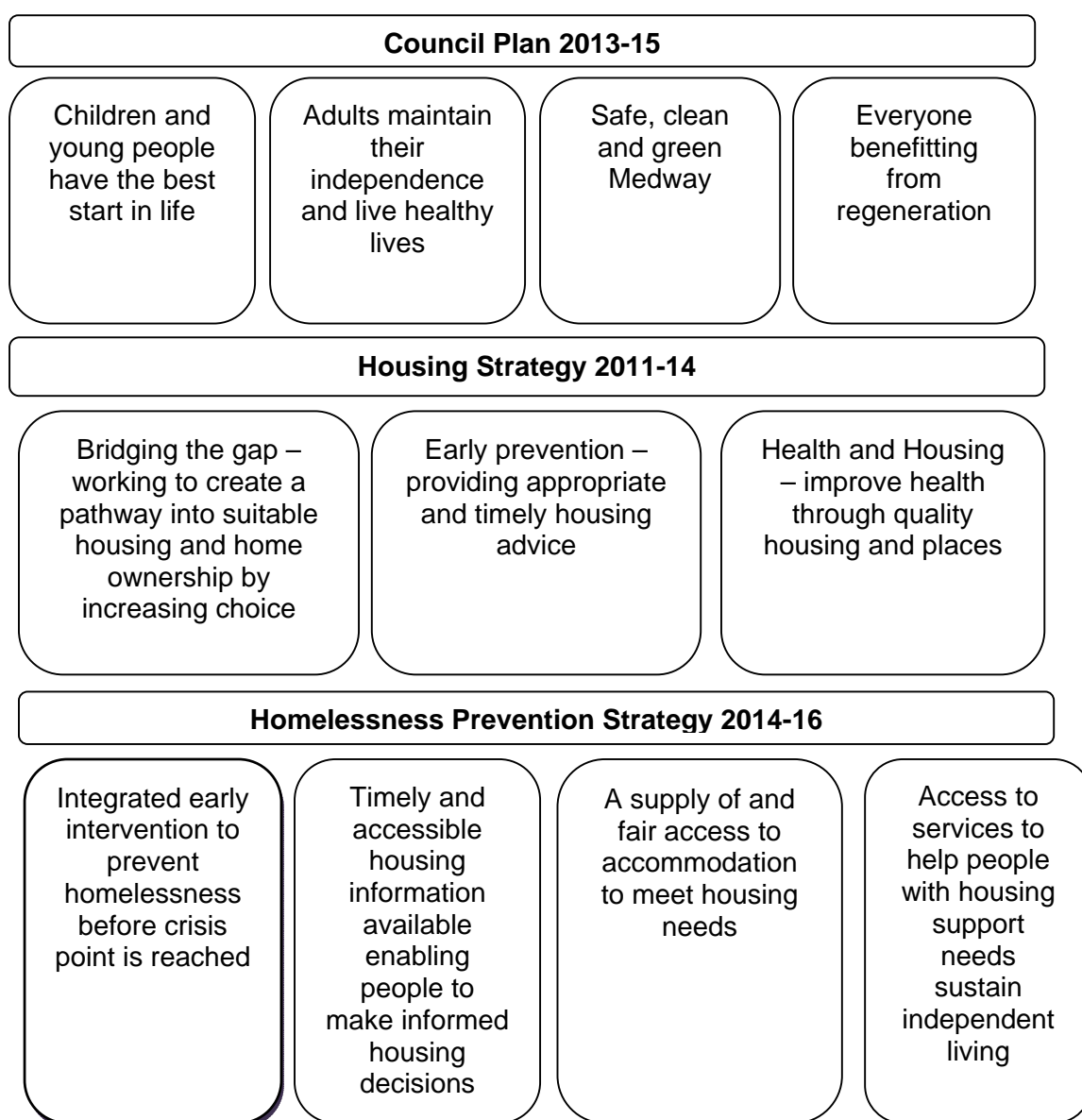
Timely and accessible housing information available, enabling people to make informed housing decisions and plan ahead

A supply of and fair access to accommodation to meet housing needs

Access to services to help people with housing support needs sustain independent living

The first part of this strategy outlines the key findings of the Homelessness Review, which was undertaken in 2013. The full findings of the review are available in the Review document, published on our website. Medway Council's vision to prevent homelessness is outlined in the next section and contains information on the methodology used to develop the four strategic aims. The third section details the strategic aims and then explains how these will be delivered and monitored. The fourth section details the resources available for the delivery of the strategic aims, whilst the last outline the monitoring arrangements. A detailed action plan underpins the strategy, identifying a range of solutions, which will contribute to achieving the four high-level priorities.

The Homelessness Prevention Strategy links to supports and builds on other relevant strategies and plans for housing and the Council Plan 2013-15.



Part 1 Homelessness Review

This section presents the key findings from the Homelessness Review. The review outlined what is driving homelessness in Medway and sets out how housing demand and policy decisions at a national and local level have shaped the response.

The Homelessness Review was conducted over a period of four months in 2013 and included undertaking research, collecting data and evidence whilst also talking with those who deliver homelessness related services. It looked at the housing market and pressures within it that contribute to people's housing problems. It also looked at patterns of homelessness, including its main causes and the types of households affected.

The review also engaged service users and service providers, including surveys, and one-to-one discussions with people who have experienced homelessness in Medway.

Key Points:

- **More households approaching the council for help** - In 2012/13, the Customer First Team received 4,264 housing queries, which resulted in a total of 554 homeless applications being made. Whilst the overall number of households approaching the council for help has increased slightly, the number who progress to making a homeless application has increased at a higher rate. For the year to date, 635 applications have been made.
- **More young people accepted as homeless** - The majority of those accepted as homeless were young people under 25 years old. This group made up 43% of those accepted compared to just 10% in Medway's population as a whole. 41% of those accepted were 25-44 years old and 14% were 45-64 years old.

The majority of the young people accepted as homeless were female; 78% compared to 22% males. As part of the review, we took a sample of young people accepted as homeless. It was found that in 58% of the cases the young person became homeless after being asked to leave by their parents. The majority of these were females (89%) and 68% either had children or were pregnant. Looking more in depth into these cases it was found that 63% had had previous contact with the Housing Solutions Team before they were accepted as homeless. In most of these cases, the young person had moved between accommodation, either in the Private Rented Sector or with friends, before returning to the family home where the relationship broke down leading to them becoming homeless. In 84% of these cases the young person was allocated a social housing property.

- **Challenging housing market** - When measured against comparable Local Authorities, Medway has a low level of affordable lettings per 1000 households, at around 100 lets a year. This means that there is a

limited supply of social rented homes and so more households will need to be assisted through the provision of private sector accommodation.

The demand for private rented accommodation has also increased which has meant that landlords can be more selective about tenants. Many vulnerable and low-income households have found it increasingly difficult to secure suitable housing.

The Review has provided a clear direction for preventing and addressing homelessness in Medway. The findings and recommendations have formed the basis for the development of this new Homelessness Prevention Strategy for the next five years.

Part 2 Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2014-16

This section looks at what homelessness is and sets out what Medway Council's approach is to tackling homelessness. It introduces our vision and the four strategic priorities, which will help to achieve this. It then details how the strategy will be delivered and the role of the Homelessness Forum and gives a summary of the consultation undertaken as part of the development of the strategy

What is homelessness?

Defining homelessness is not straightforward, either as a matter of law, or as a matter of policy. The most literal approach is to deal with those without a roof over their heads (roofless). However, street homelessness or being roofless does not constitute the full extent of homelessness. In the context of the law on homelessness, the street homeless are a numerically small, but very important part of the overall levels of homelessness.

Homelessness means not having a home – most people who are homeless don't sleep on the street. Even those with a roof over their head can still be homeless. This is because they may not have any rights to stay where they live or their home might be unsuitable.

The Council has legal duties towards certain groups of homeless households, but the scope of this strategy is to cover all forms of homelessness, not just where there is a legal duty to provide housing.

Our Vision and approach to dealing with homelessness

Medway is a place where those in housing need can access clear and appropriate pathways to a range of services to meet their need. Our partners and services are equipped to help prevent homelessness through identifying, assessing and meeting support needs in the most suitable way.

The simple definition of homelessness prevention is to stop homelessness from happening. The Homelessness Prevention Strategy is not just about responding to homelessness after the event but about where possible to intervene as early as possible to prevent homelessness. Part of this process is to move away from a crisis response and towards the earliest intervention.

Medway's approach to homelessness is to address it in proactive and integrated way with statutory and voluntary sector partners to ensure services are complementary, efficient and effective. Regardless of their type of service delivery, all of the partners, agencies and groups involved in this Homelessness Prevention Strategy understand the principles of homelessness prevention and the role they have in assisting people to move on from homelessness or away from the threat of it.

This strategy provides an overarching framework and sets the direction for the future delivery of homelessness services. To meet our vision we have set four overarching Strategic Priorities.

Integrated early intervention to prevent homelessness before crisis point is reached

Timely and accessible housing information available, enabling people to make informed housing decisions and plan ahead

A supply of and fair access to accommodation to meet housing needs

Access to services to help people with housing support needs sustain independent living

Sitting underneath each objective are a number of actions with targets, which will be linked to the monitoring regime for the strategy. We want our targets to be ambitious, however they also have to be realistic and have consideration for the changeable environment in which they will be based. It is important that the targets we set concern factors in which the partners involved in the strategy have control of and will be able to work towards positively influencing and produce solutions.

The production and delivery of a Homelessness Prevention Strategy is the statutory responsibility of the local authority. However, partnership working underpins the delivery of the priorities and actions. There are significant challenges arising from difficult housing market conditions, the current economic climate, unemployment and welfare reform. A partnership approach to devising and delivering a Homelessness Prevention Strategy is relevant now more than ever before. We have worked in partnership with the Homelessness Forum to develop this strategy and the group will work with the Council to monitor and review the strategy and the delivery of the action plan.

The strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis and we will undertake regular periodic bite size reviews of specific elements of the service to monitor delivery and promote continuous improvement.

Consultation

The views of stakeholders have significantly contributed to the development of the strategy. Web based consultation on the draft was formally opened to the public and promoted via a range of web based communication channels across different organisations. During the consultation period, a number of service areas were visited to hold specifically focussed one-to-one and group feedback sessions with providers and service users. This included visits to single homeless hostels, young person Foyers and a mother and baby unit.

Draft for Consultation January 2014

Through these sessions we were able to identify what currently works well and any gaps in service delivery.

We also held a workshop with providers, which took the form of an Appreciative Inquiry event. This is a strength-based approach that focuses on identifying positive practice and building a shared vision for the future, rather than on current problems and barriers. Delegates discovered what was currently working before talking about what the service should look like and discussed ways that this “ideal” could be achieved.

Part 3 Strategic Priorities

This section sets out the four overarching strategic priorities in detail. Partnership working is a cross cutting theme which is fundamental in delivering the actions and achieving our vision.

Strategic Priority One

Integrated early intervention to prevent homelessness before crisis point is reached

Advice and Assistance

Our aim is to provide timely and accessible services to prevent people becoming homeless, and work in partnership to tackle the underlying causes of homelessness. It is important that people at risk of being homeless are able to access appropriate advice and support to help prevent them losing their home. Keeping people in their existing homes, where suitable and appropriate, is imperative. Early intervention means tackling the trigger points of;

- Age (16-25 year olds specifically)
- Drug and alcohol issues
- Domestic abuse
- Exclusion from services due to behaviour (including school)
- Generational homelessness (where parents and even grandparents have been homeless)
- Learning disabilities
- Lone parenthood
- Mental ill health
- Offending
- Physical ill health
- Rent arrears
- Dealing with sub-standard properties

We will develop a “no wrong door” approach to ensure that anyone approaching front line services in the area can be signposted to the right place so that they can access the most appropriate help at the earliest opportunity. The cost of reaching crisis point for an individual or family is high in terms of health and wellbeing and financially.

Prevention Tools

The cost is also high for the local authority. Responding to crisis cases represents poor value for money, as it is very time intensive for staff. Once crisis management takes up the majority of time for officers it becomes very difficult for individual staff under pressure to implement new ways of working that can turn the focus back onto prevention. We will undertake a cost effectiveness exercise on prevention methods and review resourcing.

Homeless Champion

To ensure that homelessness prevention is at the forefront of everyone's agenda, we will recruit a "Homeless Champion" within the Housing Options Team, HomeChoice Team, Social Care, Public Health and Education Department who will champion the prevention agenda within their department and ensure that consistent, good quality and up-to-date advice is provided.

Young People

This strategy favours early intervention for all clients but we recognise that for young people, stopping homelessness at the start of their "housing journey" can avoid them getting into a cycle of homelessness. Therefore we intend to strengthen the approach to early intervention and prevention responses to meet the housing needs of those under 25 years old by:

- Ensuring local pathways into accommodation and support reflect the needs of younger service users and homelessness is not the only trigger that enables access to services
- Identifying opportunities to engage and consult with young people to consider improvements in services, accommodation and support provision
- Providing briefings to partner agencies and stakeholders to raise awareness around youth homelessness and the local services available to support young people
- Developing a programme of educational visits to targeted schools
- Improving the capture and sharing of local data regarding youth homelessness to target resources and develop responses
- Identifying young people at high risk of homelessness at a young age (pre 16) and through work with families, reduce the risk of homelessness at 16/17 and older
- Reviewing the Medway joint protocol regarding homeless 16/17 year olds and provide a briefing to relevant Children's Services, Housing and other staff
- Continue to work in partnership with Social Care to ensure that care leavers have a joint assessment undertaken and that they are not placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation, wherever possible.

Private Rented Accommodation

Another key part of our approach to preventing homelessness is improving the quality of accommodation within the private rented sector. It is important that we continue to work with private sector landlords and tenants to ensure that the roles and responsibilities of each are understood to maintain tenancies and prevent homelessness. This will also reduce the amount of enforcement action required on grounds of property condition. We will continue to investigate and take appropriate action in cases of disrepair, overcrowding and unsatisfactory conditions in rented housing. We will also continue to take robust action in all cases of harassment and illegal eviction and find and license Houses in Multiple Occupation.

However, one of the main issues with private rented accommodation is that households do not want to take on this accommodation as social housing is still regarded as preferential and they will pursue the option through the processes legally available to them.

Working with Landlords

We currently support private sector landlords in a variety of ways and our Landlords Forum continues to be successful in enabling a dialogue between the Council and private sector landlords operating in Medway. Over the next few years we will seek to strengthen our partnership with private landlords and ensure the Private Sector can provide sustainable housing solutions for our clients. We will continue to work in partnership with the Housing Benefits team and the DWP to identify households affected by the welfare reforms and provide them with targeted support and advice.

Repossessions

We will continue to actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme and ensure that frontline officers are trained in preventing mortgage repossessions. In order to continuously monitor trends and identify actions to mitigate identifiable pressures, we will review the Ministry of Justice Court possession statistics on a regular basis. The number of mortgage and landlord possession claims have remained relatively constant, accounting for around 8% of those accepted as homeless in 2011-12 and 2012-13. We will also work in partnership with Affordable Housing Providers to ensure that there is programme of back to work support available in Medway.

Working with Partners

It is important that the housing needs of those affected by homelessness are at the table when policies and services are being designed. We will continue our work in developing a joint commissioning approach for services, which have strategic relevance to two or more departments and review and strengthen where necessary, protocols with local hospitals, Community Mental Health Teams, prisons, probation and other agencies where appropriate. We will continue to be involved in Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements to help offenders resettle and reduce the risk of reoffending. We will also identify opportunities to work in partnership with the local Ministry of Defence to prevent homelessness resulting from people leaving the army. We will work with the Medway Action for Families Team to identify which families require support and work with them to improve their life chances. Continue to ensure that frontline staff have the appropriate skills and knowledge to recognise and raise Child and Adult Protection issues.

Linking housing and health responses is of major importance as poor health (physical and/or mental) can lead to homelessness and a period of homelessness often exacerbates and causes further issues. We will strengthen working relationships with Public Health to prevent homelessness and improve the health and wellbeing of people in Medway. We will also continue to commission Housing Related Support which helps vulnerable people improve their quality of life and wellbeing by enabling them to live as independently as possible in their community.

Provision of Affordable Housing

The level of affordable housing in Medway is lower than for many comparable urban areas across the country. We will continue to work with Registered Providers and the Homes and Community Agency to deliver a range of

affordable homes to meet need.

Strategic Aim 2

Timely and accessible housing information available, enabling people to make informed housing decisions and plan ahead

Strategic Aim One detailed how we aim to refocus our service to reflect the importance of early prevention. However, there will always be people who do reach crisis point. Working with partner agencies, we will continue to develop good quality and timely advice and information to help those in housing need.

Housing Solutions Service

We will work to ensure that anyone approaching the Housing Solutions service receives a comprehensive assessment of available housing options, including proactive advice and support to enable them to sustain their existing accommodation where appropriate or to access alternative accommodation solutions where necessary. We will review, develop and implement the framework of procedures and operational guidelines for frontline staff to reflect any changes in service and ensure that the Housing Solutions Service is making effective use of National Homelessness Advice Service Local Authority Housing Advice Line, Mortgage Debt Advice and information resources available. We will also monitor and review the time taken to make decisions in respect of homelessness applications.

We will review the local service quality standards with partners and service users, undertaking quality assurance checks on a regular basis and develop and implement a training plan for frontline staff. We will also identify opportunities for the Housing Solutions Service to utilise technology to aid smarter working and develop a programme of work to assess and enhance the customer experience. We will provide briefings to partners so that they are able to identify those who are homeless/under threat of homeless and how to refer to appropriate local services.

To ensure that the Housing Service is accessible, we will explore the possibility of providing an outreach service at access points around Medway including the use of Community Hubs. We will also review the arrangements for assisting people who are unable to read, write or speak English and look to develop information packs geared towards meeting the needs and aspirations of young people.

As demand for our housing and homelessness services continue to grow, it is increasingly important that we encourage and support self-help. As well as face-to-face advice and information, we want to ensure that good quality information is available online. The Housing Service recognises the importance of this source of information and will continue to ensure that information on the Council's website is accessible to service users and that the content is relevant, accurate and regularly updated. In addition, the Council will review and update our current suite of leaflets, which provide advice and guidance on a range of housing matters. We will work in

partnership with the Homelessness Forum to map the services available in Medway and develop a network of volunteers to keep the information up to date.

The legislative environment in which services are provided continues to change and develop. We will continue to monitor and review the trends and identify issues for those approaching the council as homeless. This includes issues with EU Accession and the impact of clients approaching from these areas. For the period October 2012 to September 2013, 21 EEA nationals approached the council, of which seven were accepted as homeless.

Money and Debt Advice

Debt and financial exclusion is a common problem for people who approach the Council's housing service. We will review and strengthen the existing referral arrangements to access money and debt advice and develop the relationship and referral routes with the court desk provider. We will also ensure that the HomeBond policy remains fit for purpose.

We will work with clients to enable them to access the Social Fund to help meet the costs of securing and furnishing accommodation thus allowing effective move-on. We will also continue to review the impact and availability of the Social Fund to ensure that it offers a viable option.

Strategic Aim 3

A supply of and fair access to accommodation to meet housing needs

Ensuring the provision of good quality and timely advice and information is imperative when helping those in housing need. However, stable and secure housing is the foundation of successful work with homeless and/or vulnerable people. People need stable homes to enable them to access support services, integrate into their local community and to obtain and sustain work and training. We will continue to manage the expectations of customers and ensure that we maximise access and availability not only to social rented accommodation but to other housing options also. This approach will continue to be at the forefront of our objective to meet housing need, prevent homelessness and reduce the use of temporary accommodation.

Private Rented Sector

The Private Rented Sector (PRS) is increasingly important as a source of accommodation for those in housing need. We are committed to increasing access to private rented accommodation and will work flexibly and responsibly to ensure that our services meet the needs of landlords. We will complete the Crisis Key Principles for PRS Access Schemes self-assessment tool and develop an improvement plan based on the findings. We will also undertake a feasibility exercise of developing a private sector leasing scheme and support landlords where they are converting or improving their properties for sharing.

We will seek to strengthen the work that we currently undertake to build relationships and trust with Private Sector landlords to increase the supply of rental properties, enabling access for both statutory and non-statutory homeless households. We will develop effective hand holding support for more vulnerable people to access the PRS and work with Landlords and Supported Accommodation Providers to identify and break down barriers for clients wishing to move on into the PRS. We will provide targeted solutions for offenders and ex-offenders to ensure there are accommodation options available for these client groups, including access to the PRS.

HOUSE

We will continue to develop the HOUSE Project in partnership with the CAB and landlords to enable PRS landlords to notify the housing service whenever tenancies might be failing, or where notices are being served and be proactive about preventing tenancy failure, training teams to recognise trigger points in tenancy breakdown and how to mitigate against them.

Where appropriate, we will use the PRS to discharge the Council's homelessness duty.

Affordable Housing

Given the deficit between the need for and supply of affordable housing, it is essential that we make the best use possible of existing affordable housing stock. One of the ways we can do this is by addressing overcrowding and under occupation. We will continue to work with our Housing Association partners to identify new ways to assist tenants to pursue mutual exchange or chain move options to relieve levels of overcrowding. We will also work with Registered Providers to increase the number of larger family homes in Medway.

Temporary Accommodation

The increase in homeless applications and acceptances has had an impact on the number of clients placed into temporary accommodation. Consequently, we will develop a temporary accommodation supply and demand model and link this to future strategic plans around tackling homelessness. We will review the PRS options for temporary accommodation provision and develop a temporary accommodation plan. Where we have no other option but to place households in temporary accommodation we will ensure that vulnerable people have targeted support to help them move on into settled accommodation.

Placement of Households from Other Areas

Changes to the welfare benefit system have meant that the private rented sector accommodation in many areas has become unaffordable for low-income households and have increased the cost of temporary accommodation. This has resulted in some Local Authorities, particularly London Authorities, procuring temporary accommodation outside of their borough.

The Housing Act 1996 sets out that "so far as *reasonably practicable* a local housing authority shall...secure that accommodation is available for the occupation of the applicant in their district." However, this does not prevent

homeless households being placed a long way out of their local area - as long as this is done on a case-by-case basis and not as a matter of course.

Medway is an area with more affordable accommodation and therefore we will continue to monitor placements made from out of the area. We will also work on a case-by-case basis to assist households in moving back to their home borough and refer them back to the services making the placement.

We will work with London Authorities and follow the out of area placement advice note which aims to encourage co-operation, transparency and effective working between officers in different authorities with the objective of assisting households that may need to move away from their home borough.

Rough Sleepers

The numbers of rough sleepers in Medway have been low relative to comparable authorities. The Rough Sleeper Count, undertaken in November 2013 identified six people sleeping rough. However, we recognise that this represents a snapshot and intelligence gathered through the Homelessness Forum working group on rough sleepers has identified around 20 people sleeping rough in Medway. We will work to develop multi-agency protocols to prevent rough sleeping and identify opportunities to develop emergency accommodation options. We will continue to identify and discuss rough sleepers as part of the Homelessness Forum and ensure that where rough sleepers are identified, there is an appropriate response in place to secure accommodation and support. To support the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) we will work in partnership with the Homelessness Forum to explore options for the provision of a winter shelter.

Rogue Landlords

Medway in common with most other authorities has a small minority of private landlords who do not act in a fair or equitable manner. These landlords have been known to intimidate and coerce vulnerable tenants, whilst failing to maintain their properties. This places vulnerable households at risk and increases the likelihood of homelessness. To help tackle these issues Medway has been able to secure additional funding from the Government to employ a dedicated resource to target these landlords. Over a two-year period, the posts will also work with tenants to raise awareness of their rights so that they feel confident to approach the Council and other agencies for support and assistance.

Strategic Aim 4

Access to services to help people with housing support needs sustain independent living

For many people who become homeless the provision of suitable accommodation is the only problem that needs to be addressed. However, many people can become homeless or threatened by homelessness because of a specific support need. For example, this can be related to a mental or physical disability or a particular circumstance such as domestic violence, a past history of offending behaviour or issues concerning drug and alcohol misuse. By properly identifying support needs, we would aim to limit with our

partners, the number of people who become homeless by providing targeted, specialist support.

Targeted Support

We will develop local support provision, including pathways into support with local providers (including Registered Providers, Health and other relevant partners). This will include supporting service providers and providing training on the risks of working with chaotic clients. As part of this work we will undertake an audit of people categorised as having a physical disability on the Gateway System and to understand if their needs are associated with disability or are more generic.

Floating Support

An increasing number of clients are presenting with complex needs. We will explore the options available for these clients and investigate how we can provide “wrap around” services. We will also ensure that local floating support provision is meeting needs, available across all tenure types and that referrals are being prioritised appropriately.

Move-on

Ensuring that there are adequate move-on arrangements with supported housing providers is paramount to ensure the goal of independent living is attainable and that there is movement through schemes. In particular, we will ensure that supported accommodation options offer progression for young people and are able to meet a diverse range of needs. As part of this work we will review move-on processes with local young person’s supported accommodation providers and how the process of transition from children leaving care to living independently is being managed.

Domestic Abuse

We will work to ensure that local services provide realistic and appropriate options for people fleeing domestic abuse and promote a “safety paramount” approach across services through training. As part of this process we will co-ordinate the data on domestic abuse referrals to provide more robust data on changes in levels of demand and undertake a review of the Sanctuary Scheme, including access to the service. We will also ensure housing is continually involved in the co-ordinated community response to domestic abuse through the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference.

Health Needs

Sustaining tenancies can be challenging for people who suffer with drug and alcohol misuse. Supported housing with specialist programmes are often essential in assisting in the rehabilitation of this group. We will consider options for supporting service users who are in recovery from substance dependency.

We will undertake Homeless Link’s Health Needs Audit to gather information on the health of homeless people in Medway. We will also ensure that existing households in temporary accommodation are receiving support including appropriate health screenings.

Part 4 Resources

This section details the resources available to deliver the actions set out in this strategy.

The delivery of the actions set out in this strategy will rely upon the resources of the council and partners. To maximise combined resources it will be important to work together, sharing expertise and good practice, avoiding duplication, identifying and meeting gaps in provision, jointly funding or procuring projects and making joint bids for any available funding streams to secure additional resources to help tackle homelessness in Medway.

The Council currently utilises a range of resources to target homeless prevention and homelessness as follows:

- Council General Funding
- Homeless Grant Funding through Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG)
- Housing Related Support funding
- Partnership funding through other agencies such as Public Health, Homeless Transition Fund, and the Homes and Communities Agency

Part 5 Delivery and Monitoring

This section details how the strategy will be monitored.

The action plan sets out the actions we will take, and each action has a timescale and a target or performance indicator to achieve. Actions may have one or more organisations leading or contributing to its implementation.

The actions are flexible and may alter to meet changing circumstances, but are all based on achieving the vision and priorities. Many actions and projects are well underway and some have already been noted within this strategy.

It is important that the action plan is monitored to ensure that progress is on target, (especially in these changing times), and to ensure that our actions remain the right ones.

The Medway Strategic Housing Partnership Board was established in 2007 as a forum of key public and private players involved in housing, brought together to help deliver decent and safe homes for all residents living in Medway. The Strategic Housing Partnership Board will monitor progress of the action plan on a quarterly basis and separate task and finish groups will be set up to carry out specific projects meet the outcomes of the strategy.

In addition to this progress will be regularly reported to the Homelessness Forum, who have contributed to the development of this strategy.

Homelessness Prevention Strategy Action Plan 2014-16

Strategic Aim 1 Integrated early intervention to prevent homelessness before crisis point is reached

Ref:	Objectives	Resources	Target/Outcome	Timescale
1.1	Develop a “no wrong door” approach to ensure that anyone approaching front line services in the area can be signposted to the right place so that they can access the most appropriate help at the earliest opportunity	No additional resources required	Consistent, appropriate advice is given by frontline services to prevent people reaching crisis point	Approach implemented by September 2014 and periodically monitored
1.2	Review resourcing to deal with the increasing demands on frontline services	Within allocated resources	Resources are realigned to ensure that the focus of the service is prevention work	Review completed by April 2014
1.3	Undertake a cost effectiveness exercise on prevention methods	No additional resources required	Resources are focused on the most cost effective method of prevention where appropriate	Review completed by September 2014
1.4	Ensure that there is a “Homeless Champion” within the Housing Options Team, HomeChoice Team, Social Care, Public Health and Education Department.	No additional resources required	There is a Corporate Commitment to tackle homelessness	Roll out programme from October 2014
1.5	Ensure local pathways into accommodation and support reflect the needs of younger service users and homelessness is not the only trigger that enables access to services	Delivered in partnership with Social Care within	Proactive, targeted support and advice given to younger service users at an early stage. Clear housing pathways in place.	Pathways in place by April 2015

		existing resources		
1.6	Identify opportunities to engage and consult with young people to consider improvements in services, accommodation and support provision	Delivered through Housing Options and Housing Related Support. No resources required	Services are developed in consultation with young people	Consultation undertaken by April 2015 and improvements to services implemented by October 2015
1.7	Provide briefings to partner agencies and stakeholders to raise awareness around youth homelessness and the local services available to support young people	No additional resources required	Young people are given consistent, appropriate advice by services across all agencies	Briefings undertaken by September 2014 and periodically updated
1.8	Develop a programme of educational visits to targeted schools	Within existing resources	Young people are given targeted advice and assistance	Programme in place by April 2015
1.9	Improve the capture and sharing of local data regarding youth homelessness to target resources and develop responses	No additional resources required	Young people are given targeted advice and assistance	In place by September 2014
1.10	Identify young people at high risk of homelessness at a young age (pre 16) and through work with families, reduce the risk of homelessness at 16/17 and older	In partnership with Social Care	To have a programme in place that will identify high risk young clients and deliver targeted support to help reduce homelessness	In place by September 2014, with baseline figure monitored on a quarterly basis

1.11	Review the Medway joint protocol regarding homeless 16/17 year olds and provide a briefing to relevant Children's Services, Housing and other staff	In partnership with Social Care. No additional resources required	That all 16/17 yr olds approaching as homeless will be subject an effective assessment of their needs to help reduce homeless in young people.	Joint protocol reviewed by September 2014 and continue to be monitored on a quarterly basis
1.12	Continue to work with private sector landlords and tenants to ensure that the roles and responsibilities of each are understood	Within existing resources and funded in part through Rogue Landlords initiative	Tenancies are maintained in the private sector and homelessness reduced. Those who approach the service are given consistent, good quality advice and assistance	Monitored on a quarterly basis
1.13	Continue to license all licensable Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)	No additional resources required	To improve and maintain the standard of accommodation and management	A baseline figure will monitored on a quarterly basis
1.14	Work in partnership with the Housing Benefits team and the DWP to identify households affected by the welfare reforms and provide them with targeted support and advice	No additional resources required	Targeted advice given to mitigate against the potential effects of welfare reform	On-going and monitored on a quarterly basis
1.15	Actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme	No additional resources required	Targeted advice given to prevent mortgage repossessions	A baseline figure will monitored on a quarterly basis
1.16	Front line officers are trained in preventing mortgage repossessions	Within existing resources	Targeted advice given to prevent mortgage repossessions	Training undertaken by December 2014
1.17	Review Ministry of Justice Court possession statistics to continuously monitor trends and	Within existing resources	Monitor the impact of various targeted interventions	Monitored on a quarterly basis

	identify actions to mitigate identifiable pressures			
1.18	Work in partnership with Affordable Housing Providers to ensure that there is programme of back to work support available in Medway	To be delivered in association with Affordable Housing Providers	Support people to access employment	Programme in place by April 2015 and monitored on a quarterly basis
1.19	Develop a joint commissioning approach for services, which have strategic relevance to two or more departments	No additional resources required	Manage resources efficiently to provide effective, good quality services	Approach rolled out from April 2015
1.20	Strengthen working relationships with local hospitals, Community Mental Health Teams, prisons, probation and other agencies where appropriate to ensure that they prevent homelessness	No additional resources required	Effective housing pathways into accommodation and support. Introduce protocols and procedures that refer people at risk of homelessness to appropriate agencies	Pathways in place by December 2014
1.21	Continue to be involved in MAPPA to help offenders resettle and reduce the risk of reoffending	Within existing resources	Effective housing pathways into accommodation and support	On-going
1.22	Identify opportunities to work in partnership with the local Ministry of Defence to prevent homelessness resulting from people leaving the army	No additional resources required	Effective housing pathways into accommodation and support	Pathways in place by April 2014
1.23	Work with the Medway Action for Families Team to identify which families require support and work with them to improve their life chances	Supported by MAFF team resources	Effective housing pathways into accommodation and support	Pathways in place by September 2014
1.24	Ensure that frontline staff have the	Within existing	Vulnerable adults and children	In place by

	appropriate skills and knowledge to recognise and raise Child and Adult Protection issues	resources	safeguarded	September 2014
1.25	Strengthen working relationships with Public Health to prevent homelessness and improve the health and wellbeing of people in Medway	Within existing and supported by Public Health	Reduce the health inequalities and introduce protocols and procedures that refer people at risk of homelessness to appropriate agencies	In place by September 2014
1.26	Commission Housing Related Support which helps vulnerable people improve their quality of life and wellbeing by enabling them to live as independently as possible in their community	Commissioning to reflect allocated budget and commissioning requirements	Housing Related Support Commissioned	Housing Related Support commissioned by June 2014
1.27	Work with Registered Providers and the HCA to deliver a range of affordable homes to meet need	Investment from HCA	Deliver 204 affordable homes per year	Monitored on a quarterly basis

Strategic Aim 2 Timely and accessible housing information available, enabling people to make informed housing decisions and plan ahead

Ref:	Objectives	Resources	Target/Outcome	Timescale
2.1	Ensure anyone approaching Housing Solutions service receives a comprehensive assessment of available housing options	Within existing resources	Reduce demands on TA and facilitate “planned” moves from existing accommodation	Implemented by December 2014 and periodically monitored
2.2	Review, develop and implement a framework	No	Clear operational guidelines in place for	Framework in

	of procedures and operational guidelines for frontline staff to reflect any changes in service	additional resources required	frontline staff	place by September 2014 and then reviewed quarterly
2.3	Monitor and review the time taken to make decisions on Part 7 applications	No additional resources required	There is clarity and standardisation of decision making processes	Implemented by April 2014 then monitored on a quarterly basis
2.4	Review the local service quality standards with partners and service users	No additional resources required	Partners and service users are clear on the standard of service they can expect to receive	Service Standards reviewed by September 2014 then annually reviewed
2.5	Develop and implement a training plan for frontline staff and undertake quality assurance checks on a regular basis	Within existing resources	Frontline staff are supported to provide a good quality, consistent service	Training plan implemented by April 2014 then reviewed half yearly
2.6	Identify opportunities for the Housing Options Team to utilise technology to aid smarter working	To be determined	Frontline staff are supported to provide a good quality, consistent service	Review undertaken by April 2015
2.7	Explore the possibility of providing an outreach service at access points around Medway to ensure that Housing Service is accessible to anyone in housing need	To be determined	Provision of a Housing Service that is accessible to anyone in housing need	Review undertaken by April 2015
2.8	Ensure that there are adequate local	Within	Provision of a Housing Service that is	Implemented by

	arrangements for assisting people who are unable to read, write or speak English	existing resources	accessible to anyone in housing need	April 2014 then reviewed annually
2.9	Develop information packs geared towards meeting the needs and aspirations of young people	To be determined be within existing levels	Young people are provided with a good quality, consistent service	Implemented by September 2014 then reviewed annually
2.10	Ensure that the website is up to date and develop self-help options to improve customer access to quality information	No additional resources required	Reduce pressure on frontline services by seeking to support more capable people to resolve their own housing needs	Implemented by September 2014 then reviewed half yearly
2.11	Develop a programme of work to assess and enhance the customer experience	To be determined	Provision of a Housing Service that is accessible to anyone in housing need	Programme in place by December 2015
2.12	Work with partners to ensure that they are able to identify those who are homeless/under threat of homeless and make referrals to appropriate local services	No additional resources required	Provide briefings to partners to ensure that consistent, appropriate advice is given by services across all agencies	Training undertaken by December 2014
2.13	Review and update our current suite of leaflets which provide advice and guidance on a range of housing matters	Within existing resources	Consistent, appropriate advice is given by services across all agencies	Review undertaken by September 2014 then reviewed annually
2.14	Work with the Homelessness Forum to map the services available in Medway and develop a network of volunteers to keep the information up to date	To be determined in partnership	Services are mapped and information provided to service users and partners	Service directory in place by April 2015

		with the HF		
2.15	Review and strengthen the referral arrangements to access money and debt advice	No additional resources required	Protocols in place and referrals effectively monitored	Protocol in place by September 2014 and then monitored quarterly
2.16	Develop the relationship and referral routes with the court desk provider	No additional resources required	Protocols in place and referrals effectively monitored	Protocol in place by September 2014 and then monitored quarterly
2.17	Undertake a review of the HomeBond policy to ensure that it is fit for purpose	No additional resources required	Suitable PRS offer in place for all client groups	Review undertaken by April 2014

Strategic Aim 3 A supply of and fair access to accommodation to meet housing needs

Ref:	Objectives	Resources	Target/Outcome	Timescale
3.1	Complete the Crisis Key Principles for PRS Access Schemes self-assessment tool and develop an improvement plan based on the findings	No additional resources required	Suitable PRS offer in place for all client groups	Completed by September 2014
3.2	Undertake a feasibility exercise of establishing a Private Sector leasing scheme	Resources to be	Suitable PRS offer in place for all client groups	Undertaken by December 2014

		considered as part of work		
3.3	Support landlords where they are converting or improving their properties for sharing	Within existing resources and supported by Rogue Landlords initiative	Suitable PRS offer in place for all client groups	Protocols in place by April 2014 then reviewed periodically
3.4	Enable PRS access or both statutory and non-statutory homeless households	No additional resources required	Suitable PRS offer in place for all client groups	Implemented by April 2014 then reviewed periodically
3.5	Develop effective hand holding support for more vulnerable people to access the PRS	To be determined	Suitable PRS offer in place for all client groups	Implemented by September 2014 then reviewed periodically
3.6	Work with Landlords and Supported Accommodation Providers to identify and break down barriers for clients wishing to move on into the PRS	No additional resources required	Suitable PRS offer in place for all client groups	Implemented by December 2014 then reviewed periodically
3.7	Provide targeted solutions for offenders and ex-offenders to ensure there are accommodation options available for these client groups, including access to private rented sector housing options	To be determined	Suitable PRS offer in place for all client groups	Pathway in place by December 2014 then reviewed periodically

3.8	Continue to develop the HOUSE Project to enable PRS landlords to notify the housing service whenever tenancies might be failing, or where notices are being served	No additional resources required	Prevent homelessness or facilitate planned moves where accommodation is unsustainable	HOUSE project implemented by April 2014 then reviewed quarterly
3.9	Be proactive about preventing tenancy failure and train teams to recognise trigger points in tenancy breakdown and how to mitigate them	Within existing resources	Prevent homelessness or facilitate planned moves where accommodation is unsustainable	Training undertaken by October 2014 and reviewed periodically
3.10	Where appropriate, use the PRS to discharge homelessness duty	No additional resources required	Homelessness duty ended for suitable clients as adequately housed	Monitored on a quarterly basis
3.11	Continue to identify tenants who are under occupying their property and provide them with targeted advice and support.	No additional resources required	Best use is made of the existing stock	Monitored on a quarterly basis
3.12	Continue to identify tenants who are over occupying their property and provide them with targeted advice and support.	No additional resources required	Best use is made of the existing stock	Monitored on a quarterly basis
3.13	Work with Registered Providers to increase the number of larger family homes in Medway	Funding program to be developed in partnership	Deliver a range of affordable homes to meet need	Funding programme to be in place by December 2014

		with Registered Providers		
3.14	Develop a temporary accommodation supply and demand model and link this to future strategic plans around tackling homelessness	No additional resources required	Wider and/or more suitable range of accommodation options available	Model developed by September 2014 then monitored half yearly
3.15	Review Private Rented Sector options for temporary accommodation provision	No additional resources required	Wider and/or more suitable range of accommodation options available	Review undertaken by September 2014 then monitored half yearly
3.16	Ensure that vulnerable people in temporary and supported accommodation have targeted support to help them move on to settled accommodation	To be determined and delivered through HRS	Increase move on opportunities to shorten time spent in temporary accommodation	Targeted support in place by September 2014
3.17	Identify opportunities to develop emergency accommodation options	To be determined	Wider and/or more suitable range of accommodation options available	Options reviewed by April 2015
3.18	Work with partners to explore options for the provision of a winter shelter to support the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEPE)	To be determined	Wider and/or more suitable range of accommodation options available	Protocol in place by December 2014 and reviewed annually
3.19	To recruit a dedicated Private Sector Enforcement Officer to target Rogue	Funding from CLG	Wider and/or more suitable range of accommodation options available	Officer in place by April 2014

	Landlords	Rogue Landlords initiative		
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Strategic Aim 4 Access to services to help people with housing support needs sustain independent living

Ref:	Objectives	Resources	Target/Outcome	Timescales
4.1	Develop local support provision, including pathways into support with local providers	To be determined and provided within existing	Effective housing pathways into accommodation and/or support	Pathways in place by April 2014
4.2	Support service providers and provide training on the risks of working with chaotic clients	To be determined and provided within existing	Consistent and appropriate service is given across all agencies	Training undertaken by September 2014
4.3	Undertake an audit of people categorised as having a physical disability on the Gateway System and to understand if their needs are associated with disability or more generic	No additional resources required	Develop floating support which is fit for purpose	Audit undertaken by September 2014 and reviewed annually
4.4	Explore the options available for the	To be	Effective housing pathways into	Pathways in

	increasing numbers of clients with complex needs and investigate how we can provide “wrap around” services	determined	accommodation and/or support	place by April 2015
4.5	Ensure local floating support provision is meeting needs, available across all tenure types and that referrals are being prioritised appropriately	Delivered as part of HRS	Develop floating support which is fit for purpose	Review undertaken by September 2015
4.6	Ensure there are adequate move-on arrangements with supported housing providers to ensure the goal of independent living is attainable and movement through schemes, where appropriate	Delivered as part of HRS	Enhanced focus on client move-on and support planning	Implemented by December 2014
4.7	Ensure supported accommodation options offer progression for young people and are able to meet a diverse range of needs	To be determined	Enhanced focus on client move-on and support planning	Implemented by December 2014
4.8	Review move-on processes with local young person’s supported accommodation providers and how the process of transition from children leaving care to living independently is being managed	To be determined	Enhanced focus on client move-on and support planning	Implemented by April 2015
4.9	Ensure local services provide realistic and appropriate options for people fleeing domestic abuse and promote a “safety paramount” approach across services through training	Within existing resources	Effective housing pathways into accommodation and/or support	Pathways in place by April 2014
4.10	Co-ordinate the data on domestic abuse referrals to provide more robust data on changes in levels of demand	No additional resources	More robust data on changes in levels of demand	Undertaken by September 2014 then baseline

		required		figure monitored on a quarterly basis
4.11	Undertake a review of the Sanctuary Scheme including access to the service	No additional resources required	Ensure the scheme is fit for purpose	Review undertaken by September 2014
4.12	Ensure that housing is involved in the co-ordinated community response to domestic violence through the MARAC	No additional resources required	Effective housing pathways into accommodation and/or support	On-going
4.13	Consider options for supporting service users who are in recovery from substance dependency	To be determined	Effective housing pathways into accommodation and/or support	Pathways in place by December 2014 then monitored annually
4.14	Undertake Homeless Link's Health Needs Audit to gather information on the health of homeless people in Medway	In partnership with Public Health (existing resources)	More robust data on the health needs of homeless clients	Audit undertaken by September 2014
4.15	Ensure existing households in temporary accommodation are receiving support including appropriate health screenings	To be determined	Reduce the health inequalities and introduce protocols and procedures that refer people at risk of homelessness to appropriate agencies	Implemented by April 2015 and then monitored half yearly

Diversity Impact Assessment: Screening Form

Directorate RCC	Name of Function or Policy or Major Service Change Homelessness Prevention Strategy		
Officer responsible for assessment Rachel Britt	Date of assessment 15 August 2013	New or existing? New	
Defining what is being assessed			
1. Briefly describe the purpose and objectives	<p>To meet the legal requirement to publish a homelessness strategy as set out in Section 1(4) of the Homelessness Act 2002.</p> <p>The Homelessness Prevention Strategy sets the direction for Medway's Homelessness Services over the five-year period 2013-18. The key priorities are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integrated early intervention to prevent homelessness before crisis point is reached 2. Timely and accessible housing information available, enabling people to make informed housing decisions and plan ahead 3. A supply of and fair access to accommodation to meet housing needs 4. Access to services to help people with housing support needs sustain independent living 		
2. Who is intended to benefit, and in what way?	All residents in Medway who need housing advice or are at risk of homelessness. Key agencies in the area where joint working will be of benefit to the community. The homelessness review document illustrates figures of those accessing the service.		
3. What outcomes are wanted?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prevention of homelessness, wherever possible ○ A reduced amount of "repeat" homelessness, involving households needing to move again within a short time ○ Rough sleeping, "sofa surfing" and use of temporary accommodation minimised. ○ A "no wrong door" approach to ensure that anyone approaching front line services in the area can be signposted to the right place so that they can access the most appropriate help at the earliest opportunity ○ Local approaches that are flexible enough to deliver personalised pathways for individuals who require a different approach ○ A suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both clients and landlords 		

4. What factors/forces could contribute/detract from the outcomes?	Contribute <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Successful partnership working and commitment from partners ○ Training for frontline services ○ A steady supply of suitable, affordable housing ○ Stable or increased supply of resources 	Detract <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Changes in legislation, policy and initiatives ○ A decrease in the level of resources ○ An increase in the volume of homelessness applications ○ A decrease in the availability of affordable housing
5. Who are the main stakeholders?	Homeless and potentially homeless households; Medway Council Strategic Housing Services, Adult Social Care and Children's Services; housing advice and support services; supported housing providers; probation services; private landlords and lettings agencies; community and voluntary agencies; Registered Providers	
6. Who implements this and who is responsible?	Homelessness and related support services are delivered by the Council in partnership with a number of other stakeholders	

Assessing impact		
7. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>racial/ethnic groups</i>?	YES	The draft strategy is fully inclusive regardless of race.
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?	The ethnicity of those accepted as homeless is representative of Medway's population.	
8. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>disability</i>?	YES	Disability can impact on assistance offered if this places them in priority need. The strategy aims to support vulnerable residents. In terms of physical disability, consideration should be given to accessibility of temporary accommodation.
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?	<p>Of those people accepted as homeless in 2012/13, 14% were in priority need due to mental health issues. This compares to 11% in 2011/12. During 2012/13, 155 people with a primary need of mental health were referred to the Gateway, of which 104 were accepted for housing related support.</p> <p>During 2012/13, 62 people with a primary need of physical disability were referred to the Gateway, of which 53 received housing related support.</p> <p>The HomeChoice Team are currently developing an accessible housing register that will enable people with a disability to make an informed choice about their housing options.</p>	

9. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>gender</i> ?	YES	There is a possibility that more women could be assisted due to pregnancy and increased incidents of domestic violence.
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?	Of those people accepted as homeless in 2012/13, 9% sited violence as their main reason for being homeless. During 2012/13, 100 people with a primary need of domestic abuse were referred to the Gateway, of which 86 were accepted for housing related support.	
10. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>sexual orientation</i> ?	YES	The assistance offered is not affected a vulnerability not affected.
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?		
11. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> be a have a differential impact due to <i>religion or belief</i> ?	YES	The assistance offered is not affected a vulnerability not affected.
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?		
12. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to people's <i>age</i> ?	YES	The strategy proposes measures aimed at improving services for Young People and reduce the disadvantages they currently face in relation to housing and homelessness.
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?	43% of those accepted as homeless in 2012/13 were under 25 years old.	
13. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>being transgendered or transsexual</i> ?	YES	The assistance offered is not affected a vulnerability not affected.
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?		
14. Are there any <i>other</i> groups that would find it difficult to access/make use of the function (e.g. speakers of other languages; people with caring responsibilities or dependants; those with an offending past; or people living in rural areas)?	YES	If yes, which group(s)?
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?		
15. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> be a have a differential impact due to <i>multiple discriminations</i> (e.g. disability <u>and</u> age)?	YES	Brief statement of main issue
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?		

Conclusions & recommendation		
16. Could the differential impacts identified in questions 7-15 amount to there being the potential for adverse impact?	YES	Monitoring will be undertaken to ensure that any of the groups within 7-15 is not experiencing adverse effects from the strategy.
	NO	
17. Can the adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group? Or another reason?	YES	Please explain
	NO	
Recommendation to proceed to a full impact assessment?		
NO	This function/ policy/ service change complies with the requirements of the legislation and there is evidence to show this is the case.	
NO, BUT ...	What is required to ensure this complies with the requirements of the legislation? (see DIA Guidance Notes)?	Minor modifications necessary (e.g. change of 'he' to 'he or she', re-analysis of way routine statistics are reported)
YES	Give details of key person responsible and target date for carrying out full impact assessment (see DIA Guidance Notes)	

Action plan to make Minor modifications		
Outcome	Actions (with date of completion)	Officer responsible

Planning ahead: Reminders for the next review		
Date of next review	February 2015	
Areas to check at next review (e.g. new census information, new legislation due)	Impact of Allocations Policy Impact of Welfare Reforms	
Is there <i>another</i> group (e.g. new communities) that is relevant and ought to be considered next time?	No	
Signed (completing officer/service manager) Rachel Britt, Housing Strategy and Partnerships Manager	Date	
Signed (service manager/Assistant Director) Matthew Gough, Head of Strategic Housing Services	Date	