

# **BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**4 DECEMBER 2014**

## **HOUSING STRATEGY 2015-2018**

Report from: Robin Cooper, Director of Regeneration Community and Culture

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### **Summary**

This report introduces the Housing Strategy 2015-18, which replaces the Housing Strategy approved by Cabinet in 2011. The Housing Strategy sets out Medway's strategic approach for housing services and details how the Council will enable the delivery of these services. The strategy provides a comprehensive picture of current housing needs and demands in Medway and sets out how the Council and its partners will counter existing and anticipated challenges.

### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

1.1 The Draft Housing Strategy (APPENDIX 1) is consistent with and sets out the Council's contribution to the Council Plan in respect of housing and is in line with the Council's budgetary framework. The Housing Strategy is a matter for Cabinet to agree and will be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 16 December 2014

### **2. Background**

2.1 The Council's previous Housing Strategy was developed at a time of significant change. The Council's housing service and its partners have been able to deliver on a range of service improvements and developments, and this strategy builds on the progress made.

2.2 As a Local Authority, the Council is required to produce a Housing Strategy that sets out our strategic approach for housing services and detail how the Council will enable the delivery of these services.

2.3 Whilst the primary focus of the strategy is housing the scope reaches far beyond. Housing has an impact on many areas including employment, crime, education and health.

### **3. Options**

#### **Option 1 – Adopt the Housing Strategy 2015**

There is a statutory duty on local authorities to produce a Housing Strategy that sets out its strategic approach for housing services and details how it will enable the delivery of these services. The adoption of the Housing Strategy would allow the Council to continue to meet this requirement.

#### **Option 2 – Do not adopt the Housing Strategy 2015**

Local authorities are required to produce a Housing Strategy that sets out its strategic approach for housing services. It also sets out the Council's objectives and expectations to allow partners to develop and deliver their own contribution towards housing provision in Medway. Not adopting the strategy would mean that the Council would not be meeting this requirement.

### **4. Advice and analysis**

4.1 The strategy has been developed based upon a comprehensive review and consideration of:

- The national and local context
- Achievements and progress of the 2011-14 Housing Strategy
- Consultation and needs analysis

4.2 The review and feedback received from the consultation has been taken into account in the subsequent development of the strategy and its action plan.

4.3 The strategy is designed around four Strategic Priorities:

- Increase the SUPPLY of suitable and affordable homes
- Improve the QUALITY of homes, environment and people's lives
- Promote SUSTAINABILITY by supporting people within their community
- Improve the FLEXIBILITY of accommodation

4.4 The Housing Strategy will be delivered in partnership with a range of organisations and stakeholders including the Medway Strategic Housing Partnership Board. The Board includes representation from Housing Associations, the Homes and Communities Agency, private landlords and local organisations who's work focuses on housing issues. This representation helps to ensure that local knowledge and expertise informs the ongoing review and development of the strategy and also acts to provide challenge to the Council. Throughout each of the priorities, focus will be given to utilising the widest possible range of resources, finding new opportunities

for funding and working with partners to take advantage of resources not available to the Council.

- 4.5 A Diversity Impact Assessment screening form (APPENDIX 2) has been completed and shows that it is unnecessary to proceed to a full diversity assessment.

## 5. Risk management

- 5.1 The primary risk and influencing factors are set out within the strategy, which will be subject to half yearly review and monitoring. Key risks include:

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 half yearly through the Strategic Housing Partnership Board, with action taken to mitigate risk
No up to date Housing Strategy in place	Local Authorities are required to produce and maintain a Housing Strategy  No strategic framework to support external bidding and funding opportunities	The adoption of this strategy would allow the Council to continue to meet this requirement

## 6. Consultation

- 6.1 To ensure the widest possible involvement in the development of this strategy the housing service has consulted with a diverse range of partners or stakeholders.
- 6.2 In spring 2014, the service undertook an exercise with the Strategic Housing Partnership Board to develop the strategic priorities. This was followed up by a Housing Seminar in the summer, when partner organisations including housing, health and support providers were invited to contribute their ideas and views.
- 6.3 In November 2014, a finalised draft Housing Strategy was circulated to our partners and made available on the Council's website and Homechoice. A number of workshop sessions with partners and staff were also undertaken.

## 7. Financial implications

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications as regards to the Draft Housing Strategy, although an effective and appropriate strategy can indirectly have a positive influence on the level of temporary accommodation required and the

cost of this service. 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.

- 7.2 The strategy will be used to direct and provide evidence to attract external funding from partners such as Housing Associations and the Homes and Communities Agency.

## **8. Legal implications**

- 8.1 Section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003 sets out the requirement for an Authority to have a Local Housing Strategy. This document will meet these requirements.

- 8.2 There are no other direct legal or contractual implications for the strategy. Where specific projects or initiatives are to be delivered as part of the strategy, they will be considered on an individual case-by-case basis and brought to members as necessary.

## **9. Recommendations**

- 9.1 Members are being asked to note, endorse and provide views on the Draft Housing Strategy 2015-18 before it is submitted to Cabinet for adoption.

### **Lead officer contact**

Matthew Gough, Head of Strategic Housing Services

### **Background Papers**

None

# Appendix 1 – Housing Strategy 2015-18

## Chapter 1 Introduction

The Council's previous Housing Strategy was developed at a time of significant change, politically, socially and economically. Despite these changes, the Council and its partners have been able to deliver on a range of service improvements and developments. This strategy builds on the progress made over the last three years setting out our key objectives and how we aim to meet these.

As a Local Authority, the Council is required to produce a housing strategy that sets out our strategic approach for housing services and detail how we will enable the delivery of these services. This strategy provides a comprehensive picture of the current housing needs and demands in Medway and sets out how we will counter existing and anticipated challenges. It also considers new approaches to tackling emerging challenges and sets out how we can take opportunities arising from changes in legislation and the wider environment.

Whilst the primary focus of this strategy is housing, the scope reaches far beyond. Poor housing or lack of a home has a detrimental impact on many areas including employment, crime, education and health. Housing and support provides valuable help to enable people to achieve increased independence at times of difficulty and can prevent difficulties becoming a crisis.

The strategy does not specifically include actions to tackle and prevent homelessness in Medway as these are set out in our Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2013-18. It is recognised that homelessness is caused by a complex interplay between a person's individual circumstances and adverse factors outside their direct control. These problems can build up over years until the final crisis moment when a person becomes homeless. This strategy and the Homelessness Prevention Strategy are intrinsically linked and there will naturally be some overlap between the two strategies, however, for a full picture, both should be considered together.

The Housing Strategy is designed around four Strategic Priorities:

- Increase the SUPPLY of suitable and affordable homes
- Improve the QUALITY of homes, environment and people's lives
- Promote SUSTAINABILITY by supporting people within their community
- Improve the FLEXIBILITY of accommodation

The Housing Strategy will be delivered in partnership with a range of organisations and stakeholders. The Medway Strategic Housing Partnership Board helps to ensure that local knowledge and expertise informs the ongoing review and development of the strategy and also acts to provide challenge to the Council. Throughout each of the priorities, focus will be given to utilising the widest possible

range of resources, finding new opportunities for funding and working with partners to take advantage of resources not available to the Council.

## Chapter 2                      Setting the Vision

The Council has a vision for Medway as a future city with a rich heritage and a great future. The Housing Strategy contributes to the four priorities and two core values set out in the Council Plan 2013-15.

- Children and young people have the best start in life in Medway
- Adults maintain their independence and live healthy lives
- Safe, clean and green Medway
- Everyone benefiting from regeneration

The two values set out the principles of how we work to deliver these priorities, they are:

- Putting customers at the centre of everything we do
- Giving value for money

To ensure the widest possible involvement in the development of this strategy the housing service has consulted with a diverse range of partners and stakeholders. Feedback received from the consultation has been taken into account in the subsequent development of the strategy and its action plan.

In April 2014, the service undertook an exercise with the Strategic Housing Partnership Board to develop our strategic priorities. This was followed up by a Housing Seminar in June 2014. Various partner organisations including housing, health and support providers were invited to contribute their ideas and views of housing services to aid the development of the new Housing Strategy. Delegates took part in various workshops giving them the opportunity to reflect on services and achievements so far, decide what works well and to focus on moving forward and creating effective, collaborative ways of working to deliver improved, targeted services.

In October 2014, a draft copy of the new Housing Strategy was circulated to our partners and made available for consultation on both the Council's and the Kent Homechoice websites. We also undertook a number of workshop sessions with our partners and held a consultation event for staff.

Our vision from the Housing Strategy 2011-14, continues forward to this new strategy. Housing makes an important contribution to the wider priorities of the Council such as reducing health inequalities, improving educational attainment and community cohesion. Good housing leads to a better tomorrow.

## Chapter 3 Housing Strategy in Context

### 3.1 National Context

The Coalition government has undertaken changes to housing, planning welfare and social policy. These changes have gone on to influence the organisation, structure and funding of central and local government. Regulation has been intended to be “light touch” with an emphasis on value for money and financial viability.

Most notably, the Localism Act 2011 offered new freedoms and flexibilities for local governments and focuses on enabling a clearer and more democratic planning system, the empowerment of the local communities and a reform to allow localised decisions about housing. Localism Act introduces significant housing related changes, including:

- **Social housing allocations reform** - Social housing is in great demand and the Act gives local authorities more freedom to develop policies on the eligibility for households to enter the housing register. While this means that local authorities can prevent people who do not need social housing from joining the list, they are still obliged to ensure that social homes accommodate those most vulnerable.
- **Social housing tenure reform** - Allowing for more flexible arrangements for people entering social housing in the future by enabling social landlords to grant tenancies for a fixed length over time.
- **Reform of homelessness legislation** - Enables local housing authorities to discharge their statutory homeless duty into suitable private rented accommodation.
- **Reform of council housing finance** - Enables local authorities to retain collected rent and spend it on local priorities.
- **National Home Swap Scheme** - Allows social tenants to find a home that better suits their needs.
- **Affordable Rent** – Allows Housing Associations to let a property at an affordable rent (inclusive of service charges, where applicable) of up to 80% of the gross market reflective of the property size and location.

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced a range of reforms the main elements being:-

- The introduction of Universal Credit will merge benefits to provide a single monthly payment
- A cap on the total amount of benefits an individual or couple can receive
- Payments of the housing component to benefits made directly to the tenant rather than the landlord



- The introduction of size criteria for housing benefit claims in the social rented sector

There have also been reforms within the NHS and in social care which, have an impact on the provision of housing services. The 2012 Health and Social Care Act aims to make the NHS more responsive, efficient and accountable. Local authorities have been given a core role in Public Health and there is now more of a focus on integrating health, social care and housing. The Better Care Fund (formerly the Integration Transformation Fund) was announced by the Government in the June 2013 spending round, to ensure a transformation in integrated health and social care. The Better Care Fund creates a local single pooled budget to incentivise the NHS and local government to work more closely together around people, placing their well-being as the focus of health and care services.

### **3.2 Local Context**

Medway is the largest conurbation in the south east outside of London but also has an extensive rural area. The population is currently estimated at 265,000 and is predicted to increase by 6% to 290,000 in 2021. The biggest change, in line with national trends, is in the over 65 age group where we expect this group to grow by over a quarter to 2021. The 0-15 yr olds will increase by 11% and those of working age are increasing at the slowest rate of 5%.

In Medway, there is a limited supply of social housing with up to five times as many social housing units available in most comparator authorities. Currently, there are a total of 111,162 homes in Medway<sup>1</sup>, 85% of which are in the private sector. As of 1 April 2014, there were 16,770 affordable homes, 3,013 of which are owned by Medway Council. Housing Associations own 13,757 with the majority being owned by MHS Homes (56%).

The Council's current Local Plan was adopted in 2003 and contains a target to seek at least 25% of homes to be affordable on any site meeting the Council's size threshold. The council is working on a new Local Plan, which will replace the 2003 Medway Local Plan. This will be a single document covering the period up to 2035 and will provide for the number of homes and jobs, and supporting infrastructure, such as transport, health facilities, schools, parks that the area and its growing population needs over this time.

Over the last few years there has been a significant increase in the size of the private rented sector in Medway. In 2001 there were 9,350 households who rented privately, whilst by 2011 the census indicated this had increased to 18,150 households. This represents a 7% growth in the number of homes in the sector for each year and has been a trend that seems to have continued, the number currently being just under 20,000. Rent levels have increased at varying rates in the private rented sector. For smaller units they have increased little, whilst for a three bed house they have risen by 14% and the rent for a two bed flat has increased by more than 20%.

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<sup>1</sup> Valuation Office Agency, April 2013

The increase in the size of the rented sector almost perfectly matches the fall from 47.7% to 38.8% in the number of households who owned their home with a mortgage. It is therefore; clear that the private sector is displacing owner-occupiers in Medway's housing market.

The growth in the demand for private rented housing means that landlords are now increasingly able to pick and choose their tenants. This has resulted in a limited number who are willing to provide accommodation to vulnerable households in housing need. These households can often have a history of rent arrears, challenging behaviour or are on benefits. The overall effect is that it is not possible for many households to meet their housing needs or aspirations through the market. There has been a year on year increase of just over 40% of households making a homeless application; many of who are vulnerable and with complex needs. This has placed pressure on services and increased the use of temporary accommodation, a trend seen across the region.

Historically, Medway does have a high number and turnover of benefit claimants moving into and out of the area. A recent review based upon a sample of accommodation managed by non-registered providers found that in 44% of cases the tenant come from out of the area. The majority being from the Kent area. This data indicates that we have not seen the high number of people moving into Medway seeking lower rented accommodation that some anticipated due to Welfare Reforms, although there have been instances where this has happened.

It is difficult to predict how the affordability of housing in Medway will alter over the short and medium term; however there have been some predictions of rising interest rates in early 2015. With interest rates remaining stable for the last few years, many homeowners will have not experienced the effect of a rate rise. Some homeowners may already have reached their limit of affordability and could be at risk of default if rates rise. The Housing Strategy will need to be reviewed regularly to monitor any significant changes which could impact on the affordability of housing in Medway.

## Chapter 4 Strategic Priority One

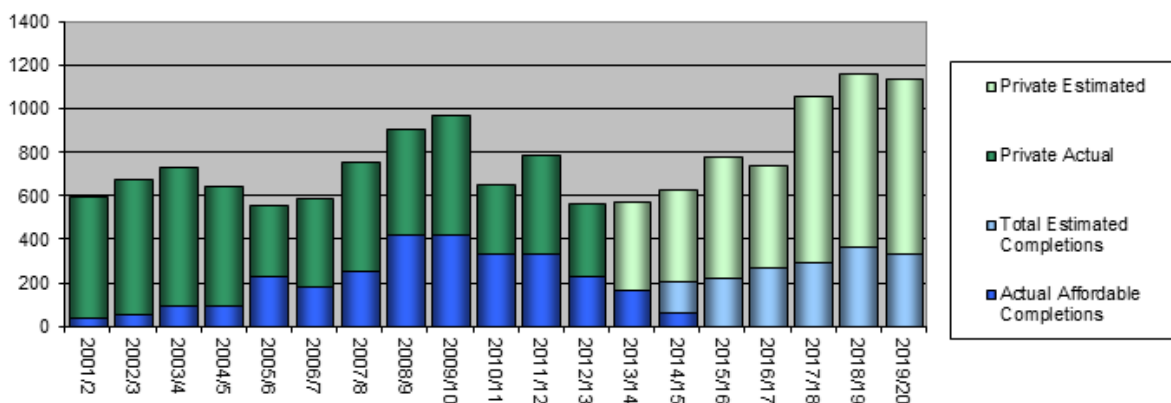
### Increase the SUPPLY of suitable and affordable homes

This section looks at how we can increase the supply of suitable and affordable homes in Medway. We want to encourage a choice of homes that meets the needs of our existing residents however pressure is increasing on our capacity to ensure enough suitable accommodation locally. New housing has a key role to play in meeting the demand across all tenures, helping to rebalance local markets, develop more mixed and sustainable communities, and bringing in additional funding for investment and improvements. We want to develop high quality new homes in locations where people want to live.

#### 4.1 The need for new homes

Over the last ten years housing completions in Medway have fallen short of the target required with 7,508 new homes developed against a target of 8,035. This decrease in house building is a trend that has been seen nationally due to the downturn in the economy. In 2013/4, house building in Medway was at its lowest level since 2006/7. Consequently, the number of new affordable homes delivered has also decreased from just over 400 units in 2008/9 to 166 in 2013/14.

The graph below shows housing delivery in Medway since 2003 and estimates future delivery up to 2026. It is estimated that the level of house building will increase and that around 2,700 new affordable homes will be developed.



A refresh of the current Strategic Housing Market Assessment is currently being undertaken. However a recent Housing Statement assessed Medway's affordable housing requirement to be in the range of 1,040 and 1,460 homes per year. Whilst we will continue to work closely with developers, housing associations and the Homes and Communities Agency to deliver new affordable homes, it is clear that we will not be able to meet our estimated housing requirement. We must therefore ensure that the social housing stock is flexible to ensure that housing needs can be met and that mobility through the housing market is supported. This is discussed further in Strategic Aim Four.

## **4.2 Delivery of affordable homes to meet need**

### **4.2.1 The enabling role**

The successful delivery of affordable housing in Medway is dependent upon the Council's relationships with Housing Associations, funding bodies and developers. The Council has a good track record in enabling the delivery of affordable homes and we will seek to strengthen our established working relationships, knowledge and expertise to ensure that the development of affordable housing is maximised.

Through our enabling role the Council aims to deliver 204 additional affordable homes a year and secure at least £20m worth of investment in new affordable housing per year. The majority of affordable homes are developed via the planning system, through Section 106 agreements. The Council's current target is to seek at least 25% of homes to be affordable homes on any site meeting the Council's size thresholds. We will continue to work with partners to develop affordable homes in line with the current planning policy.

### **4.2.2 Funding of affordable homes**

The future funding of affordable housing is not only a question of where the resources come from, but also how they are made available. The model over recent decades has been one where housing grant dominated. Grant still has a significant role to play in delivering affordable homes. There is, however, a compelling need to make the levels of grant that will become available over the foreseeable future work much harder to deliver value for money. There is likely to be a greater focus on equity investment models in future years, where the public sector is able to recover and reinvest its original investment, or loan guarantees, which can bring down the cost of borrowing for developers.

Under the current 2015-18 Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) funding programme, £1,863,000 was allocated to schemes in Medway. This will deliver 235 homes. Further schemes are likely to be accepted into the programme via continuous market engagement and we anticipate that a further 70 homes will be delivered via the Affordable Homes Guarantees Programme. The Council will continue to working in partnership with Housing Associations and HCA to monitor the delivery of the affordable housing programme.

### **4.2.3 Housing Revenue Account building programme**

As well as working with Housing Associations to develop new affordable homes, local authorities are now able to build homes through the amendments of borrowing rules. The Council has developed its own affordable housing delivery programme and aim to deliver 50 units over the next three years. Our Housing Revenue Account Business Plan contains further details of our development programme.

### **4.2.4 The need for larger family homes**

In Medway, there are insufficient properties to meet the needs of larger families. There are just over 700 households currently registered with Homechoice who have a need for five or more bedrooms, but over the last three years just two five

bedroomed properties have been let through Homechoice. The Council will continue to work with Housing Associations to increase the supply of larger homes. However, we remain aware that the limitations on affordable rent make these homes generally uneconomic to develop due to housing benefit levels. The Council will also continue to support larger households, where appropriate, to access private sector accommodation.

#### 4.2.5 Specialist accommodation

The Council want to support people to work towards independent living, helping them to participate in mainstream society and make a contribution to the local economy. The Council hope to achieve this by looking at a range of opportunities to help improve access to different types of housing and where appropriate developing purpose built specialist accommodation to meet needs. The Council works closely with social care to ensure that a choice of specialist housing and support is available to meet the needs of the elderly, disabled and other vulnerable people. The Council will undertake further research into the housing needs of vulnerable client groups and use this evidence to help focus our work on assisting people to live independently.

### **4.3 Empty homes**

Empty homes represent economic, environmental and social costs to the community. As homes deteriorate they can become visually unattractive, therefore affecting the amenity of the local surrounding area as they create an impression of neglect and decline. Empty homes can also be an attraction for vandalism and anti-social behaviour, which poses a risk for neighbouring properties and local residents, while increasing work for local fire and police services.

#### 4.3.1 Empty homes in Medway

The most recent empty property numbers for Medway show that the level of homes remaining empty for more than six months is at its lowest for more than 10 years. The rise in house prices and demand for private rented homes has meant that whilst properties might have previously remained empty, they are being let or sold. Where empty properties do present a risk to adjoining properties or land, we will continue to work with owners, Housing Associations and landlords and agents to encourage them to be brought back into use.

### **Actions to achieve Strategic Priority One**

- 1.1 Work with partners to deliver at least 204 additional affordable homes a year
- 1.2 Secure at least £20m worth of investment in new affordable housing per year
- 1.3 Deliver a mix of affordable housing in line with local planning policy
- 1.4 Increase the number of larger families assisted to secure suitable, appropriate housing
- 1.5 Work closely with social care to ensure that a choice of specialist housing and support is available to meet the identified needs of the elderly, disabled and other vulnerable people
- 1.6 Where empty properties present a risk to adjoining properties or land, continue to work with homeowners, landlords and agents and Housing Associations to encourage them to be brought back into use

## Chapter 5 Strategic Priority Two

### Improve the QUALITY of homes, environment and people's lives

This section explores the impact that people's housing and environment has on their health and wellbeing. It looks at the consequences of poor and unsuitable housing and sets out ways we can reduce health inequalities and improve the quality of homes, the environment and people's lives. It also sets out opportunities to integrate health, social care and housing services to deliver more cohesive services.

#### 5.1 Health and Housing

Health and housing are intrinsically linked and it is well recognised that good quality homes are important for the health and well-being of those living in them. The Marmot review<sup>2</sup> into health inequalities in England demonstrated that the 'broader determinants of health' – people's local environment, housing transport, employment and their social interactions – can be significantly influenced by how local authorities deliver their core roles and functions. Suitable accommodation that is safe and warm is one of the foundations of personal well-being, whether in childhood or old age. It enables people to access basic services, build good relationships with neighbours and others and maintain their independence.

The cost of unsuitable accommodation is not just to the people living in it. Poor housing costs the NHS at least £2.5 billion a year in treating people with illness directly linked to living in cold, damp and dangerous homes. Royal College of Physicians reported that amongst the over-65s, falls and fractures account for 4 million hospital bed days each year in England, costing £2 billion. It is also widely recognised that a range of factors influence an individual's mental well-being, some unique to that person, others more relevant to the social and economic circumstances in which that people find themselves. Poor housing conditions can play a role in worsening the mental ill-health conditions that exist.

##### 5.1.1 Integration of services

Housing related support and services provided by Housing Associations can have a significant impact on the physical health and mental well-being of people. Access to good quality, affordable housing and advice and support can both improve the lives of residents and also reduce the demand for health and social care services. Social housing accounts for 15% of homes in Medway and therefore, social housing providers are able to influence the lives of people by providing good quality, well maintained housing. The homes and services they provide can help to tackle health inequalities and work to prevent readmissions to hospital, speed up discharge from hospital and provide community health services.

There is a continuing shift to treating people in the community and at home and GP's are being tasked to make commissioning decisions about the services they buy.

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<sup>2</sup> Fair Society, Healthy Lives, 2010 [www.instituteofhealthequity.org](http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org)

Housing Associations are therefore well placed to play a vital role in shaping these services. The Council will continue to work in partnership with Medway CCG, Public Health and social care to develop a cohesive approach to tackling and preventing health inequalities. The Council will also look to work with a range of health professionals who visit residents in their homes to raise awareness of housing issues including fuel poverty and develop referral networks so that those residents most at risk are identified early and referred for help.

#### 5.1.2 Floating Support

Housing Related Support services enable people to live as independently as possible. The Council continues to commission a range of support and services and the floating support element of this service can contribute to improving health and welfare of people within their homes. This can include helping people claim benefits, manage debts and budgeting, finding appropriate support groups, signposting to other agencies and developing life skills. The floating support service was re-commissioned in June 2014 and the service is provided by WestKent Lifeways. We will continue to work with WestKent Lifeways to roll out an outcomes based system to monitor the services provided and help ensure that we are targeting our services appropriately.

#### 5.1.3 Priority through the allocation policy

For those people whose housing conditions have a detrimental impact on their health we will continue to give them priority through the allocations policy to ensure that their housing needs are appropriately met. Medical priority will be awarded according to the extent of which the health or welfare of one or more of the applying household is affected by their housing conditions and the expected benefits of providing suitable settled accommodation.

#### 5.1.4 Improving energy efficiency

The Council will continue to help households to improve the energy efficiency of their properties, and we have entered into partnership with other local authorities in Kent, KCC, Housing Associations, NHS and others to create the Kent and Medway Green Deal Partnership. The Green Deal is a financial package which allows householders to pay for energy efficiency improvements to their properties over a period of up to 25 years. The payments are designed to be less than the financial savings the householder accrues on their energy bill as a result of the work, resulting in an overall financial saving. The Energy Companies Obligations (ECO) is a Government scheme to help reduce energy consumption and support those living in fuel poverty by funding energy improvements. The Partnership is responsible for delivering the warm homes project across Kent and Medway. We are also working with Partners to provide Warm Homes Call Centre and an Energy Saving Information Pack to be sent to all new referrals and any interested residents who contact the Warm Homes centre. The Council will continue to work with the Kent and Medway Green Deal Partnership to develop ways to improve the energy efficiency of homes in Medway.

The Council will also work to ensure that all private sector landlords in Medway are aware of their obligations under the Energy Act 2011, to ensure that they approve all reasonable requests from their tenants for energy efficiency improvements after April



2016 and that all private rented homes meet the minimum energy standard of EPC rating E by April 2018. Working in partnership with the Landlords Forum, we will encourage landlords and agents to take advantage of the maximum package of measures afforded by Green Deal and ECO funding.

## **5.2 Working in Partnership with Private Sector Landlords and Agents**

The role of the private rented sector in housing provision is increasing in Medway and we aim to maximise the full potential of this sector as a flexible, well-functioning element of the housing market. The Council want to see a private rented sector that operates good standards of management and provides good quality affordable accommodation.

### **5.2.1 Professionalising the private rented sector**

Over the life of the previous strategy we were able to continue to build and maintain good relationships with private landlords and agents who work with us to improve housing conditions. Whilst most landlords and agents in Medway offer a good service to their tenants, some do not always offer a professional service.

The Council will pursue policies to further professionalise the private rented sector and will continue to work in partnership with the National Landlords Association to provide training and accreditation for landlords and agents. Medway is part of the Kent Landlords Accreditation Scheme, which recognises good landlords and agents who have the skills needed to run a successful rental business and provide good quality, safe accommodation. Although the Landlords Accreditation scheme has been successful in raising standards in the private sector, prospective tenants face various reference checks, credit checks and fees, which can make it difficult to secure suitable accommodation. The Council has developed, with the support of the Landlords Forum, a Tenants Accreditation scheme to acknowledge and encourage responsible tenants and improve tenants' knowledge of their rights and responsibilities. Tenants who comply with the requirements of the Code of Conduct will be accredited through the scheme and receive a certificate which can be used as a reference. We will continue to develop and promote both accreditation schemes to increase the take up.

### **5.2.2 Supporting private landlords**

Whilst some households with specific support and accommodation needs will be able to secure social housing, a high percentage will live in the private rented sector. We will continue to work closely with landlords and agents to ensure that any additional support services are provided when required. The Medway Landlord Forum meets twice a year and is an essential point of contact between the Council and landlords and agents. It allows the exchange of ideas, information and best practice. The Council will continue to develop the forum, encourage new membership and use it as a conduit to share information and best practice. We will also continue to work with partners to deliver advice and assistance to single people and childless couples to access private rented accommodation.

### **5.2.3 Homes in Multiple Occupation**

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) require a licence if they consist of three storeys or more, which are occupied by five or more tenants in two or more households. HMO's which require a licence are inspected and required to meet minimal legal standards prior to licensing. Our inspection regime is a rolling programme dependent upon the original date of licensing. Where a HMO does not require a license, a risk assessment is undertaken in line with Government guidance. This assessment covers a range of factors including the number of units, whether the flats are self-contained or shared and also the type of occupation. Properties are assessed as being high, medium or low risk and priority for inspections is given to the high and medium risk. The Council will continue to work with landlords and agents to ensure that all licensable HMOs are inspected and licensed. We will also continue to inspect properties and respond to issues raised by landlords and agents and where appropriate, ensure relevant standards are met in line with the Council's Enforcement Policy.

### **5.2.4 Tackling rogue landlords**

Unfortunately, there is a small minority of landlords in Medway who provide unacceptably poor homes and standards of management and in these cases we undertake appropriate enforcement action. In early 2014 we were awarded £64,000 from DCLG to set up a rogue landlord initiative. Through the initiative we are able to focus our efforts to tackle behaviour such as harassing tenants or evicting them without notice; failing to carry out essential maintenance leading to unhealthy or unsafe conditions; driving tenants into arrears by adding exorbitant fees/charges to their account without telling them and consistently letting properties that are substandard. Dedicated private sector enforcement officers work in partnership with the Crown Prosecution Service, Health and Safety Executive and Asset Recovery teams and the Police. We will continue to develop the Rogue Landlord initiative.

### **5.2.5 Letting Agent Redress Scheme**

Under amendments to the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013, agents are now required to sign up to a redress scheme. The Redress Scheme for Lettings Agency Work and Property Management Work Order 2014 made membership of a scheme a legal requirement from 1 October 2014. A new Code of Practice on the management of property in the private rented sector was also published.

The redress scheme provides a free, independent service for resolving disputes between lettings agents and their customers. This could include both landlords and tenants. We will work with the National Landlords Association and the Landlords Forum to ensure that tenants, landlords and agents are aware of their rights and responsibilities under the scheme. The Council will also seek clarification from agents to ensure they have registered with a redress scheme and where appropriate we will seek compliance.

## **5.3 Healthy Places**

Every resident should expect to enjoy places that are clean, safe and green. Poor quality spaces are visible indicators of decline and disadvantage and reduce quality

of life. We are committed to taking a leading role in ensuring that our homes and public spaces are fit-for-purpose and enhancing the quality of people's lives and strengthening our communities. This objective sits alongside wider council strategic plans such as the Sustainable Community Strategy.

#### 5.3.1 The role of housing associations

Neighbourhoods suffering from vandalism, anti-social behaviour and harassment destabilise feelings of safety and security. Any type of anti-social behaviour or crime affects all types of tenure. The injunction to prevent nuisance and annoyance and the criminal behaviour order (CBO) are two of the new powers that will be available to tackle anti-social behaviour. The injunction will tackle low level anti-social behaviour and CBOs will be used for serious cases which result in criminal conviction. We will work with our Community Safety Partnership and housing providers to help make a greater impact in making Medway a safe place to live. The Council will also work with Housing Associations operating in Medway to encourage residents to build a renewed sense of pride and provide education on the various options for disposing of different types of refuse and encourage recycling.

Working in partnership with Housing Associations, we will develop an integrated approach on the work and skills agenda across all housing partners in order to maximise opportunities arising from housing investment and development programmes.

#### 5.3.2 Community Engagement initiative

The Community Engagement initiative was set up in October 2012 in partnership with DWP. It supports the Government's strategy for Social Justice and gives individuals and families facing multiple disadvantages the support and tools they need to turn their lives around. A multi-agency team is formed every 'street week' to tackle key issues; such as health, housing, worklessness, poor education/truancy, anti-social behaviour. The initiative involves a number of agencies including, Youth Employment Services, Carers First, Kent Fire Rescue and the Home Office. Kent Police also take part in order to deal with any criminal activity that is unearthed during the visits. The initiative has been focused on Luton so far and areas in Gillingham are now being targeted. The Council will continue to support the Community Engagement initiative and deal appropriately with any issues raised as a result of the 'street week' work.

#### 5.3.3 Dementia and learning disabilities friendly communities

As identified in the Governments Lifetime Neighbourhoods initiative, it is important to ensure that the older and less mobile people in our community have easy access to community facilities such as post offices, doctors' surgeries and centres for social activity. Easy access to social and leisure facilities can enhance independent living and redress isolation. In March 2012, the government launched 'challenge on dementia' which set out a series of commitments. One of these was creating dementia friendly communities and Medway's Dementia Strategy 2014 sets out how Medway will work towards these commitments. The Council will work in partnership with social care to develop the role housing can play in meeting the challenges of creating dementia friendly communities. We will also ensure that all new affordable

housing is located and designed in a way that residents are able to access community facilities such as post offices, healthcare and shops through the use of Housing Quality Indicators Framework.

The Jigsaw project is all about enabling better outcomes for people with learning disabilities and autism. A recent study found that in Medway, out of the 169 people with learning disabilities and autism surveyed, 38% reported experiences of victimisation/hate incidents. Those who were younger and those who had mental health difficulties were more likely to report victimisation and people with lower support needs were significantly more likely to report victimisation experiences. We are part of a pilot project, which aims to develop Learning Disability Friendly Communities where people feel safe when out and about. The information sessions are primarily aimed at frontline community services. We will continue to develop our role within this project.

#### **5.4 Medway's design standards for new homes**

The quality of new homes developed in Medway is just as important as the number that we deliver and gives an opportunity to provide homes, which offer quality, sustainability and durability.

##### **5.4.1 Design Standards**

Our Interim Medway Housing Design Standards were adopted by Cabinet as planning guidance in November 2011. The standards are based on the minimum gross internal area, room sizes and dimensions set out in the London Plan 2011. The Government is currently consulting on future national standards and we ensure that local policies will reflect the outcome of this consultation.

All new affordable homes schemes must be built to meet or exceed the Housing Corporations Design and Quality Standards (2007). At least 50% of all affordable homes are also built to the Joseph Rowntree Lifetime Homes Standard and all the homes must meet the Secured by Design standard. We will continue to work in partnership with Development Control, Developers and Housing Associations to ensure that these standards are met.

The Council will also ensure that consideration is made to the design standards developed by the Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) for achieving age-inclusive housing. These include: generous internal space standards; adaptability and 'care aware' design which is ready for emerging telecare and telehealthcare technologies; circulation spaces that encourage interaction and avoid an 'institutional feel'; shared facilities and community 'hubs' where these are lacking in the neighbourhood.

## **Actions to achieve Strategic Priority Two**

- 2.1 Work in partnership with Medway CCG, Public Health and social care to develop a cohesive approach to tackling and preventing health inequalities
- 2.2 Raise awareness of fuel poverty and develop a referral network for health professionals who visit residents in their homes
- 2.3 Implement an outcome based floating support service to help people live independently
- 2.4 Review the Council's Allocations Policy to ensure priority is given to households whose housing conditions have a detrimental impact on their health
- 2.5 Continue to deliver and promote both the Landlord and Tenant accreditation scheme to increase take up
- 2.6 Continue to work in partnership with the National Landlords Association to provide training and accreditation for landlords and agents through the Landlords Forum
- 2.7 Continue to work with partners to deliver advice and assistance to single people and childless couples to access private rented accommodation
- 2.8 Licence all licensable HMOs and continue to inspect properties, responding to issues raised by landlords and agents. Where appropriate, ensure relevant standards are met in line with the Council's Enforcement Policy.
- 2.9 Improve the housing conditions in the private rented section by using enforcement action to tackle rogue landlords
- 2.10 Promote awareness of the Lettings Agent Redress scheme and work to ensure compliance
- 2.11 Work with the Community Safety Partnership and Housing Associations to help make a greater impact in making Medway a safe place to live
- 2.12 Work with Housing Associations operating in Medway to encourage residents to build a renewed sense of pride in their communities through a range of initiatives
- 2.13 Continue to work as part of the Community Engagement initiative and deal appropriately with any housing related issues as a result of the 'street week' work
- 2.14 In partnership with social care, develop the role of housing in creating dementia friendly communities
- 2.15 Continue to review and develop the role of housing as part of the Jigsaw project
- 2.16 Work in partnership with Development Management, Developers and Housing Associations to ensure that:
  - All affordable housing meets the HCA Design and Quality Standards
  - At least 50% of all affordable homes meet Lifetime Homes Standards
  - All affordable homes meet Secure by Design Standards
  - Ensure that all affordable homes are designed with consideration to the HAPPI design standards

## Chapter 6 Strategic Priority Three

### Promote SUSTAINABILITY by supporting people within their community

This section looks at how the provision of accommodation alone is not enough to meet housing needs. A range of tailored solutions needs to be provided through working with partners in the delivery of housing related support. Housing related support varies according to the specific needs of the different clients and can include short and long-term accommodation based services, floating support, crisis intervention and refuges. Support is available to many people who are not eligible for social care under the Fair Access to Care Services criteria, but who do need a level of support. It is intended to enable people to live as independently as possible and for those who can do so, to make the transition to fully independent unsupported living.

#### 6.1 Re-commissioning Housing Related Support services

In June 2014 we re-commissioned our Housing Related Support services. An extensive needs assessment was undertaken and this, along with consultation with providers and clients, has been used to develop a model, which targets specific identified support needs. The Council worked with a number of external organisations including the Chartered Institute of Housing, CLG and other local authorities to develop a new model for delivering Housing Related Support. The Service Quality Tool (SQT) is a web-based tool and contains all of the key elements of the former quality assessment framework (QAF), but is easy to use and more closely aligned with adult social care outcomes and the personalisation agenda. It puts service users at the heart of the assessment process, and can be nationally moderated to ensure support services are consistently high quality and robust.

The outcomes for service users will be measured through the SQT and are based on the Every Child Matters Framework for housing with support. In the next sections we will explore how we intend to support various vulnerable groups within Medway to live independent lives.

#### 6.2 Older People

The majority of Medway's older population live in privately owned housing and they will continue to be a part of their local community. Good housing for older people can help enable them to live independent and healthy lives. It can also prevent costs for social care and the NHS and for those older people who move to a smaller, more accessible and manageable home, it can free up local family housing. The needs of an aging population and the number of older people with disabilities present specific challenges. Adaptations and mobility or other aids can help people live independently for longer, yet few owner-occupier homes nationally have been adopted to meet people's needs.

### 6.2.1 The impact of an ageing population

The number of older people with support needs due to dementia, illness or incapacity is anticipated to increase; however, many people will not be able to remain in their own homes without assistance. Helping them adapt, repair or improve their property could mean that they may not need to depend on a comprehensive care package or risk hospitalisation in the future. Providing adaptations to support an older person to remain at home for just one year can save £28,000 on long-term care costs.

Currently, housing related support for older people is mainly through the provision of sheltered housing and alarm services. If we are to address the needs of our older population in Medway, we need to continue to develop a range of interventions for older people and ensure that services delivered are appropriate, suitable and fully integrated with our social care and health partners. The Council will work in partnership with social care to review and develop a new model of accommodation and support for older people. This will include the promotion of telecare and telehealth services that make use of technology to help people live independently in their homes.

### 6.2.2 Working with Medway CCG

The new Better Care Fund in England requires local authorities and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) to provide seven-day services to support hospital discharge and prevent unnecessary hospital admissions. When older people present to emergency and urgent care centres, it is important to be able to identify those people who can be discharged straight back home with appropriate support and complete their ongoing assessment in their own home. The Council will work with Medway CCG and social care to develop an effective discharge-to-assess model. The discharge-to-assess model works on the basis that the acute team ensures that the person's needs are assessed, and any acute illness stabilised and treated; but instead of also determining the person's ongoing care and support needs, they refer straight back out to a 'wraparound' community team who can complete assessments and organise support from the person's own home. A number of individual studies have shown the benefits of early senior review linked to these models in terms of reduced admission rates, reduced bed occupancy, and higher rates of discharge home within 24 hours of presentation.

The Council will also work with Medway CCG to identify areas for joint working which will enable older people to live independently for example using the choose and book service to ensure that older people are discharged to accommodation where they are able to receive appropriate support.

### 6.2.3 Managing frailty

Older people who are frail are more likely to be affected by relatively minor illness, which can present with a sudden decline in health, which can lead to the person falling, becoming immobile or confused. The Council will work in partnership with Health and social care to identify and support people who are frail, to ensure they are accommodated suitably.

#### 6.2.4 Specialist housing advice

First stop is a free independent service funded by Government for older people and their families and carers which aims to help older people make informed decisions about their housing, care and support options. We will explore opportunities of working with First Stop to further develop our local advocacy and support service within Medway in respect of housing issues.

#### 6.2.5 Tackling social isolation

Loneliness and social isolation can affect anyone but older people are particularly vulnerable after the loss of friends and family, reduced mobility or limited income. It is estimated that among those aged over 65, between 5 and 16% report loneliness and 12% feel isolated<sup>3</sup>. Social isolation can have an impact on the physical and emotional health and wellbeing of a person. Studies indicate that older people who are socially isolated have longer stays in hospital, a greater number of visits to their GPs and are more dependent on homecare services. As part of the review of accommodation and support for older people in Medway we will develop the role housing can play in tackling social isolation. We will also work with social care, Public Health, Medway CCG and providers in Medway to develop a cohesive approach to reducing social isolation in older people living in Medway.

### **6.3 People with physical disabilities**

#### 6.3.1 Housing Advice

The Council work to assess the housing need of a person with a physical disability and advise them on ways to ensure that their housing needs are met, either through floating support, advising them on alternative accommodation options or signposting them to other agencies. Our dedicated Occupational Therapist works closely with service users to carry out a full assessment of their needs. Working in partnership with Housing Associations and social care, suitable accommodation can be secured to meet their housing needs.

There are a number of options to help meet people's housing needs including moving to alternative accommodation and adapting clients' homes. A Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) could be used to help improve the existing home. These grants are means tested and can cover works that help to reduce hazards that lead to falls in the homes by e.g. the provision of stair lifts, replacing baths with level access showers, ramps and safer access. Changes to the funding regime now mean that the DFG budget is included in the Better Care Fund. We will continue to work in partnership with social care and Medway CCG to develop the way DFGs are administered. We will also look at new opportunities for meeting the housing needs of people with physical disabilities that might arise from the integration of services through the Better Care Fund.

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<sup>3</sup> Greaves, C.J. and Farbus, L. (2006) 'Effects of creative and social activity on the health and well-being of socially isolated older people: outcomes from a multi-method observational study', The Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health, vol 126, no 3, pp 133–142.



## **6.4 Domestic Abuse**

People experiencing domestic abuse are a group for whom early intervention is critical in terms of personal safety, health and well-being.

### **6.4.1 Supporting victims**

Providing housing related support to those affected by domestic abuse helps reduce homelessness, health costs and the costs of providing social care to children, whilst also providing support for those affected. Interventions are generally short term, leading to women either returning to their homes or finding alternative accommodation. The new domestic abuse housing related support service was commissioned in June 2014 and brings together the provision of 14 refuge places, the Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) service and floating support. The IDVA service provides the victim with a primary point of contact and IDVA's normally work with their clients to reduce levels of risk, discuss the range of suitable options and develop safety plans. Bringing all three contracts under one provider, CASA Support, should make the service more efficient, effective and produce better outcomes for clients. The Council will work closely with CASA support to develop the new service and monitor outcomes for clients.

In addition, the sanctuary scheme aims to help people who have experienced domestic abuse to remain and feel safe in their own home. This is achieved by providing additional security measures. The Homelessness Strategy 2013-17 contains further details and a commitment to review the sanctuary scheme.

### **6.4.2 Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference**

When dealing with high-risk domestic abuse cases, we work in partnership with the Police, Probation and other relevant agencies through the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). The Council will continue to ensure that we contribute to the MARAC was necessary and use the learning from cases to improve services.

## **6.5 Offenders/Ex-offenders**

Offenders and ex-offenders are a group for whom access to housing and support to maintain a tenancy can help prevent re-offending. They are often released with limited levels of family support or budgeting skills, and sometimes with impulsive or aggressive behaviour.

### **6.5.1 Housing Support**

While some ex-offenders leaving institutions in Medway will have a link with Medway, the majority will not. However people released originating from other areas of the UK may elect to stay in Medway. A recent Kent Probation service-user led survey of needs, identified obtaining accommodation on release from prison as their top priority. Housing support enables ex-offenders to develop skills to retain tenancies and provide a platform for future employment. The placement of offenders into settled and suitable housing can be a foundation for rehabilitation, re-settlement and managing risk and can be a springboard for other important steps, such as

gaining employment, registering with a doctor and accessing other support, such as drugs and alcohol services. Without stable accommodation, offenders are more at risk of re-offending, thereby creating more victims and causing more damage to local communities. The new offenders/ex-offenders housing related support service was commissioned in June 2014. Langley House Trust will provide 27 units of supported accommodation and a further 14 will be provided by Pathways. We will work closely with the providers to develop the new service and monitor outcomes for clients.

The Council will also further develop the role housing can play in enabling a smooth transition from prison into the community ensuring that the impact to both the ex-offender and the community is lessened.

#### **6.5.2 Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements**

We will continue to be involved in Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements to help offenders resettle and reduce the risk of re-offending. The Council will provide targeted solutions for offenders and ex-offenders to ensure there are accommodation options available for these client groups, including access to the private rented sector.

### **6.6 People with Mental Health Problems**

The connection between housing problems and mental health issues is complicated but they are frequently cited as a reason for a person being admitted or seeking assistance from mental health care services. Finding appropriate accommodation and lack of appropriate move-on housing can be a reason for delays in discharging people back into the community from secondary care.

#### **6.6.1 Housing Support**

Housing related support makes several different contributions to supporting people with mental health problems. It can provide a step down from hospitals or residential care; provide an alternative to residential care; and it supports independent living for people with lower level needs who would not be eligible for Social care.

The council is working to reduce the use of residential care; however, there are relatively high numbers of people with mental health problems in residential care funded by Medway Council. Housing related support can provide an alternative to this for some people and is usually cheaper as well as enabling independent living and the prospect of moving to non-supported living. The Council will continue to work in partnership with social care to identify and develop suitable accommodation for those with mental health issues.

#### **6.6.2 Co-morbid cases**

People with long-term physical health conditions are the most frequent users of health care services and commonly experience mental health problems such as depression and anxiety, or dementia in the case of older people. As a result of these co-morbid problems, the prognosis for their long-term condition and the quality of life they experience can both deteriorate markedly. In addition, the costs of providing care to this group of people are increased as a result of less effective self-care and

other complicating factors related to poor mental health. The Council currently provides targeted housing advice and support to households to maintain existing tenancies. Where appropriate, the Council also prioritise those seeking social housing. The Council will continue to work in partnership with health and social care to further develop the role housing has to play in dealing with co-morbid cases.

### 6.6.3 Mental Health link worker

In 2013, the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee carried out a broad scrutiny review of mental health services across Medway, with a focus on user and carer experience and the outcomes of using services. One of the recommendations was that an NHS/Medway Council jointly funded link worker with expertise in housing and mental health be based at Riverside One to support clients who present with a mental health need. The role of the link worker is to develop strong links across housing, the mental health social work team and the Mental Health Trusts (KMPT) community mental health team. The main objective is to reduce delays in responding to the needs of individuals presenting to housing who would appear to be experiencing mental health problems. This role has been in place since June 2014 and we will continue to develop the role and over time make important links with local housing and support providers and to primary care. The Council will also explore how this model of service delivery can be replicated with other vulnerable client groups.

## **6.7 People with learning disabilities**

Increased longevity amongst people with learning disabilities, combined with higher survival rates at birth means that we will see an increase in numbers of people with learning disabilities accessing our services. There is also likely to be a growing demand for support from older people with learning disabilities whose ageing parents become too frail to care for their grown up children.

### 6.7.1 Local Offer

The Children and Families Act 2014 has changed the law, giving children, young people and their parents greater control and choice in decisions and ensuring that needs are properly met. Medway has produced a 'Local Offer' which sets out the provision available for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The Local Offer web page is the starting point for Medway's Local Offer and is a one-stop shop for information on service provision. The Council will continue to work with Social care to develop the housing information and advice available as part of the Local Offer.

The Council will also work with Social care and other agencies to map out the housing pathway in Medway for young people with SEND.

### 6.7.2 Housing Support

The future need for housing related support for people with a learning disability is likely to increase due to demographic and policy changes. People with learning disabilities are increasingly living in community settings, where appropriate to their needs, and this will increase demand for housing related support and

accommodation. The Council will work in partnership with Social care and the Institute of Public Care to undertake a needs analysis people with young SEND and adults with learning disabilities.

## **6.8 Troubled Families**

The Troubled Families programme was launched by the government in 2011 with the aim to get children back into school, reduce youth crime and antisocial behaviour, put adults on a path back to work and bring down the amount public services currently spend on them.

### **6.8.1 Medway Action for Families**

Medway Action for Families (MAFF) is Medway's response to the three year national Troubled Families programme. The MAFF team has identified over 500 families that with out help can changes to the way they live. Housing services have worked with the MAFF team to identify and resolve many housing issues that the families may face and also made referrals for support where appropriate. We will continue to work with the MAFF team to identify and work with families in Medway.

#### **Actions to achieve Strategic Priority Three**

- 3.1 Work in partnership with social care to review and develop a new model of accommodation for older people
- 3.2 Review the use of telecare and telehealth services to help people live independently in their homes and commission and deliver new services based on the outcome
- 3.3 Work with Medway CCG and social care to develop an effective discharge-to-assess model
- 3.4 Work in partnership with health and social care to identify and support people who are frail and ensure they are suitably accommodated
- 3.5 Explore opportunities to further develop local advocacy and support services in respect of housing issues for older people
- 3.6 Work with Public Health, social care, Medway CCG and housing providers in Medway to develop a cohesive approach to reducing social isolation in older people living in Medway
- 3.7 Ensure access to local support and advocacy services within Medway for clients with physical disabilities
- 3.8 Provide Disabled Facilities Grants where appropriate and work with social care and Medway CCG to review the way in which this assistance is provided
- 3.9 Work with partners to review and develop integrated services that meet the housing needs of people with physical disabilities through the Better Care Fund

### **Actions to achieve Strategic Priority Three continued**

- 3.10 Implement a new outcome based support service for clients affected by domestic abuse that provides advice, IDVA service, floating support and refuges
- 3.11 Review the provision of the Sanctuary scheme and commission services that will best meet the needs of clients
- 3.12 Actively participate in the MARAC to ensure that clients affected by domestic abuse are supported through the multi-disciplinary process and are provided with appropriate housing options
- 3.13 Implement outcome based services with our accommodation and support providers to help offenders/ex-offenders secure and maintain accommodation
- 3.14 Further develop the role housing can play in enabling a smooth transition from prison into the community ensuring that the impact to both the ex-offender and the community is lessened
- 3.15 Review and develop arrangements to support MAPPA to help offenders resettle and reduce the risk of reoffending
- 3.16 In partnership with social care review and develop suitable accommodation options for those with mental health issues
- 3.17 We will work in partnership with health and Social Care to develop the role housing has to play in dealing with co-morbid cases
- 3.18 Formalise the dedicated mental health housing worker role and develop this role to support and develop links with local housing, support providers and mental health services
- 3.19 Work with social care to replicate the link worker role with other vulnerable client groups
- 3.20 To develop the Local Offer in partnership with social care to develop the housing information and advice available for clients with learning difficulties
- 3.21 Develop and map out a housing pathway in Medway for young people with SEND in partnership social care

**Increase the FLEXIBILITY of accommodation**

This section looks at how we can increase the flexibility of our housing stock in Medway. Increasing the supply of affordable homes across all tenures is an important part of this however we want to ensure that the social homes that we do have help to improve people's life chances, providing support at a time when they need it, for as long as they need it.

**7.1 Mobility through the housing market**

The number of households approaching the Council wishing to secure social housing has increased and it is seen by many as offering security and a better standard of accommodation at lower rents. Medway's Allocation Policy was amended in September 2013 and the changes introduced have helped to manage demand and allowed the Council to provide applicants with an honest assessment of their likelihood of being rehoused. At end of Quarter 1 of 2014-15 there were 4,840 households on the active housing register, with an average waiting time of six months for those in the most severe housing need (Band A). Despite the changes, there is still an increase in households who the Council would accept as being unable to secure suitable and affordable housing within the private sector. This is happening at the same time that social housing size criteria has been introduced, therefore, tenants are faced with a choice to stay and pay the shortfall, or move to a home that more closely match their needs, as happens in the private rented sector.

**7.1.1 Fixed-term tenancies**

The introduction of fixed-term tenancies for social housing means that landlords will need to offer support and possibly alternative housing options, to households whose tenancies are coming to an end. Purchasing a stake in the property at the end of the fixed-term could offer long-term security of tenure that would not otherwise be available and should be actively considered as an option by social landlords.

Fixed-term renewable tenancies can assist social landlords to facilitate mobility within and out of the sector, ensuring that lettings are targeted at those in most need. The employment and income status of tenants should be considered at the end of their fixed-term. Under-occupying households could be offered alternative appropriately sized homes and those on high incomes could be assisted into intermediate or market home ownership, or pay a higher rent to remain in their home, the proceeds being used to support new affordable housing. The use of fixed-term renewable tenancies should be accompanied with appropriate exceptions and safeguards and lifetime tenancies should remain an option for the most vulnerable households. The Council will work with our partners to review and refresh our Tenancy Strategy to ensure that we conserve and increase the supply of affordable housing available in Medway and that people are provided with the help that people need for as long as they need it.

### 7.1.2 Affordable Rents

As well as tenure reform, the Government introduced an 'Affordable Rent' product as its preferred method for new rented social housing provision. Housing Associations have the flexibility to charge rents of up to 80% of local market rents. We will continue to work with Housing Associations to ensure that rents are kept affordable for households in housing need. The affordable rent framework also allows Housing Associations to convert a proportion of their existing homes to affordable rent when they become vacant. The Council will continue to actively engage with Housing Associations to ensure that as far as possible any conversions do not have a negative impact on meeting housing needs in Medway.

### 7.1.3 Mutual exchange

Many social housing tenants are able to mutually exchange their property with another tenant. This helps create mobility within the social housing stock and gives greater choice to tenants over where they live. The Council will work in partnership with Housing Associations to promote the use of mutual exchanges to help address overcrowding and under occupation and improve tenant mobility.

## **7.2 Making the best use of the existing stock**

People on the Housing Register are more likely to have additional needs, which cannot be met, by the housing market. We will continue to seek to make best use of our social housing stock and maximise the choices available to older people and people with disabilities that are looking for homes that match their needs. Our dedicated Occupational Therapist will continue to work with clients to assess their needs and match them with the most appropriate properties. This also ensures value for money from the public investment that has gone into building adapted and accessible properties, or subsequently fitting aids and adaptations. The Council will continue to develop how adapted properties are advised through Homechoice.

## **7.3 Young people**

The affordability and type of accommodation available in Medway means that although many young people would like to leave the parental home and live independently they are not doing so. Very often young people are asked to leave the family home during a crisis and few have the life skills to effectively deal with this.

Young people are often unaware of the support that is available to them and they need to be sign-posted to appropriate services, which have a specialist understanding of their needs. They are more likely to move between accommodation and are more likely to accrue rent arrears, increasing the probability of becoming institutionalised as they face barriers to achieving independent living. There is also an increasing financial cost of youth homelessness the longer they remain homeless which can include extra policing and increased health and social services provision. The Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2013-17 sets out the work we are doing to strengthen the approach to early intervention and prevention responses to meet the housing needs of those under 25 years old.

### 7.3.1 Housing offer for young people

For those in poor quality private rented sector housing, or at home living with parents and finding it increasingly difficult to live independently, we will explore new housing products, such as purpose built rented housing tailored to young people. The Council will look at developing a programme that will offer time limited shared accommodation for young people. This could be targeted at those with low support needs who would not currently be accepted as homeless, as they are not in priority need. For example, a young person aged 18-24 would be eligible to be accommodated in this scheme by demonstrating their housing need and participating in work or training as condition of access to the accommodation.

## 7.4 **Older People**

As discussed under the previous strategic priority, good housing for older people can help enable them to live independent and healthy lives. While residential care is the preferable option for some people, it is not the solution for everybody. As promoting choice and independence are key themes in national and local priorities, the Council is working to develop alternatives to residential care. By improving the housing offer in Medway we can enable people to make choices about the type of accommodation they would like to move in to.

### 7.4.1 Housing Offer for Older People

For those who decide not to live independently, a choice of specialist housing is available in Medway. Extra care housing schemes enable people to self-care for longer but with access to care and other services on-site as needed. There are three extra care schemes in Medway currently and a further two are being developed.

Sheltered housing is self-contained housing which is built to mobility standards sometimes with a scheme manager on site and communal facilities such as a lounge area. In Medway, there are 40 schemes across seven sheltered housing providers with approximately 1200 sheltered housing units.

As previously stated, we will work in partnership with social care to review and develop a new model of accommodation and support for older people. Following the outcome of the review, we will work with Housing Associations and the HCA to develop new accommodation for older people as required.



#### **Actions to achieve Strategic Priority Four**

- 4.1 Work with partners to review and refresh our Tenancy Strategy to ensure that we conserve and increase the supply of affordable housing available in Medway and that people are provided with the help that people need for as long as they need it
- 4.2 Continue to actively engage with Housing Associations to ensure that as far as possible any conversions to Affordable Rent do not have a negative impact on meeting housing needs in Medway
- 4.3 Work in partnership with Housing Associations to promote the use of mutual exchanges to help address overcrowding and under occupation and improve tenant mobility
- 4.4 Continue to develop how adapted properties are advertised through Homechoice
- 4.5 Look at developing a programme that will offer time limited shared accommodation for young people

## **Chapter 8 Resources**

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.

The Council currently utilises a range of resources to meet housing needs:

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

## Housing Strategy Action Plan 2015-18

### Strategic Priority One – Increase the SUPPLY of suitable and affordable homes

Ref:	Objectives	Resources	Outcome	Timescales
1.1	Work with partners to deliver at least 204 additional affordable homes a year	Within existing resources in partnership with the HCA and Housing Associations	Delivery of additional affordable homes	Monitored annually
1.2	Secure at least £20m worth of investment in new affordable housing per year	Within existing resources in partnership with the HCA and Housing Associations	Delivery of additional affordable homes	Monitored annually
1.3	Deliver a mix of affordable housing in line with local planning policy	Within existing resources in partnership with the HCA, Developers and Housing Associations	Housing delivered to meet local need	On-going
1.4	10% of additional affordable homes to be for larger families	Within existing resources in partnership with the HCA and Housing Associations	Increase the number of larger families assisted to secure suitable, appropriate housing	On-going on a scheme by scheme basis
1.5	Work closely with social care to ensure that a choice of specialist housing and support is available to meet the identified needs of the elderly, disabled and other vulnerable people	Within existing resources in partnership with the HCA and Housing Associations	Homes delivered that meet identified local need	On-going
1.6	Maintain the level of long-term empty homes below 1.6% of the total private sector stock	Within existing resources	Minimise the impact of empty homes on local communities and to make best use of existing housing	Monitored annually
1.7	Work to bring back into use at least 100 empty properties per year	Within existing resources	Minimise the impact of empty homes on local communities and to make best use of existing housing	Monitored annually

**Strategic Priority Two – Improve the QUALITY of homes, environment and people’s lives**

<b>Ref:</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
2.1	Work in partnership with Medway CCG, Public Health and social care to develop a action plan to identify targets and deliver improvements which tackle and prevents health inequalities	Within existing resources	Health inequalities reduced and a more cohesive service for clients	Action plan developed by September 2015
2.2	Promote awareness of fuel poverty and develop a referral network for health professionals who visit residents in their homes	Within existing resources	Reduce the level of fuel poverty	December 2015
2.3	To support 585 vulnerable client at any one time to access the outcome based floating support service	Housing Related Support funding	Enable people to live independently	Monitored annually
2.4	Review the Council's Allocations Policy to ensure priority is given to households whose housing conditions have a detrimental impact on their health	Within existing resources	Allocations policy reviewed	April 2015
2.5	Increase the membership of the Landlord and Tenant accreditation schemes by 10%	Within existing resources	A professional, well-functioning private rented sector	Monitored annually
2.6	To deliver four training and accreditation sessions to landlords and agents through the Landlords Forum in partnership with the National Landlords Association	Within existing resources	A professional, well-functioning private rented sector	Monitored annually
2.7	Provide support to 80% of single people and childless couples accessing the KASH service that results in homelessness being prevented	Within existing resources	A professional, well-functioning private rented sector	Monitored quarterly
2.8	Licence or take enforcement action in respect of 100% of licensable HMOs and continue to inspect	Within existing resources	A professional, well-functioning private rented sector	Monitored quarterly

	properties, responding to issues raised by landlords and agents. Where appropriate, ensure relevant standards are met in line with the Council's Enforcement Policy.			
2.9	Improve the housing conditions in the private rented section by using enforcement action to tackle rogue landlords	Within existing resources	A professional, well-functioning private rented sector	Monitored quarterly
2.10	Promote awareness of the Lettings Agent Redress scheme and work to ensure compliance through the Landlords Forum	Within existing resources	A professional, well-functioning private rented sector	On-going
2.11	Develop an action plan with the Community Safety Partnership and Housing Associations to address identified needs	Within existing resources	A living environment which is clean, safe and green	Action plan developed by December 2015
2.12	Work with Housing Associations operating in Medway to ensure that all residents are provided with clear guidance and advice on suitable behaviour and support them to take action where issues arise	Within existing resources	A living environment which is clean, safe and green	Monitored annually
2.13	Continue to work as part of the Community Engagement initiative and deal appropriately with all housing related issues as a result of the 'street week' work	Within existing resources	A living environment which is clean, safe and green	Monitored annually
2.14	Develop an action plan with social care to deliver dementia friendly communities	Within existing resources	A living environment which is clean, safe and green	Monitored annually
2.15	To deliver and review a pilot project to support those with Learning Disabilities to live independently and sustainably within their community	Within existing resources	A living environment which is clean, safe and green	Pilot delivered by December 2015 and reviewed by April 2016

2.16	All affordable housing to meet the HCA Design and Quality Standards, Lifetime Homes Standards, Secure by Design Standards and HAPPI design standards	Within existing resources	Good quality, new affordable housing developed	On-going on a scheme by scheme basis
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**Strategic Priority Three – Promote SUSTAINABILITY by supporting people within their community**

Ref:	Objectives	Resources	Outcome	Timescales
3.1	Work in partnership with social care to review and develop a new model of accommodation for older people	Within existing resources	Older people living in suitable accommodation which enables them to live independently	Review undertaken by December 2015
3.2	Review the use of telecare and telehealth services to help people live independently in their homes and commission and deliver new services based on the outcome	Better Care Fund	Older people living in suitable accommodation which enables them to live independently	Review undertaken by December 2015
3.3	Work with Medway CCG and social care to develop an effective discharge-to-assess model	Within existing resources/Better Care Fund	Older people living in suitable accommodation which enables them to live independently	Model developed by April 2015
3.4	Develop a pathway in partnership with health and social care to support vulnerable older people to maintain or secure suitable accommodation	Within existing resources/Better Care Fund	Older people living in suitable accommodation which enables them to live independently	Pathway developed by September 2015
3.5	Ensure dedicated, suitable advice, advocacy and support is provided to older people and clients with physical disabilities in respect of housing issues	Within existing resources	Older people living in suitable accommodation which enables them to live independently	Pilot developed by June 2015
3.6	Develop an action plan with Public Health, social care, Medway CCG and housing providers in Medway to tackle social isolation in older people	Within existing resources and in partnership with commissioners	Older people living in suitable accommodation which enables them to live independently	Action plan developed by April 2016

3.7	Provide Disabled Facilities Grants where appropriate and work with social care and Medway CCG to review the way in which this assistance is provided	DCLG funding and within existing resources	People living in homes which enable independent living	Annually monitored
3.8	Work with partners to review and develop integrated services that meet the housing needs of people with physical disabilities through the Better Care Fund	Better Care Fund	People living in homes which enable independent living	April 2016
3.9	Implement a new outcome based support service for clients affected by domestic abuse that provides advice, IDVA service, floating support and refuges	Within existing resources	Clients experiencing Domestic Abuse are supported to live independently	April 2015
3.10	Review the provision of the Sanctuary scheme and commission services that will best meet the needs of clients	Within existing resources	Clients experiencing Domestic Abuse are supported to live independently	Review undertaken by September 2015
3.11	Actively participate in the MARAC to ensure that clients affected by domestic abuse are supported through the multi-disciplinary process and are provided with appropriate housing options	Within existing resources	Clients experiencing Domestic Abuse are supported to live independently	Monitored quarterly
3.12	Support at least 40 offenders/ex-offenders at any one time to help secure and maintain accommodation	Within existing resources	Offenders/ex-offenders are supported to live independently	Monitored quarterly
3.13	Work with partners to ensure a smooth transition for ex-offenders moving back into the community	Within existing resources	Offenders/ex-offenders are supported to live independently	Pathway developed by December 2015
3.14	Review arrangements to support MAPPA to help offenders resettle and reduce the risk of re-offending	Within existing resources	Offenders/ex-offenders are supported to live independently	Review undertaken by September 2015
3.16	In partnership with social care review and develop	Within existing resources	Clients with Mental Health	Undertake a needs

	suitable accommodation options for those with mental health issues		issues are supported to live independent lives	assessment by December 2015
3.17	Work in partnership with health and Social Care to develop the role housing has to play in dealing with co-morbid cases	Within existing resources	Clients with Mental Health issues are supported to live independent lives	Developed by June 2015
7	Formalise the dedicated mental health housing link worker role	To be determined	Clients with Mental Health issues are supported to live independent lives	April 2015
3.20	Work with social care to replicate the mental health link worker role with other vulnerable client groups	To be determined	Vulnerable clients are supported to live independent lives	September 2015
3.21	Develop the Local Offer in partnership with social care to provide housing information and advice for clients with learning difficulties	Within existing resources	Vulnerable clients are supported to live independent lives	Monitored quarterly
3.22	Develop a housing pathway in Medway for young people with SEND in partnership social care	To be determined	Vulnerable clients are supported to live independent lives	Pathway developed by June 2015
3.23	Undertake in partnership with social care needs analysis of people with young SEND and adults with learning disabilities	To be determined	Vulnerable clients are supported to live independent lives	Needs assessment by October 2015
3.24	To support those families being assisted as part of the MAFF initiative to secure and maintain appropriate accommodation	Within existing resources	Troubled families are aided to turn their lives around	Monitored quarterly

#### **Strategic Priority four – Improve the FLEXIBILITY of accommodation**

<b>Ref:</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
4.1	Work with partners to review and refresh our Tenancy Strategy	Within existing resources	Best use of the existing housing stock and people supported to live independent	Review undertaken by October 2015



			lives	
4.2	Monitor the number of homes converted to Affordable Rent by Housing Associations	Within existing resources	Best use of the existing housing stock and people supported to live independent lives	Monitor quarterly
4.3	Work in partnership with Housing Associations to promote the use of mutual exchanges	Within existing resources	Best use of the existing housing stock and people supported to live independent lives	Monitor quarterly
4.4	Ensure that adapted properties are suitably and clearly advertised through Homechoice	Within existing resources	Best use of the existing housing stock and people supported to live independent lives	Monitor quarterly
4.5	Review the accommodation available for Young People in Medway and develop an action plan in association with social care to meet identified need	Within existing resources	Young people are supported to live independent lives	Review undertaken by September 2015

## Appendix 2: Diversity Impact Assessment: Screening Form

<b>Directorate</b>  RCC	<b>Name of Function or Policy or Major Service Change</b>  Housing Strategy 2015	
Officer responsible for assessment  Rachel Britt	Date of assessment  15 September 2014	New or existing?  New
<b>Defining what is being assessed</b>		
<b>1. Briefly describe the purpose and objectives</b>	<p>To meet the legal requirement to publish a Housing Strategy as set out in Section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003.</p> <p>The Housing Strategy sets the direction for Medway's Housing Services over the three-year period 2015-18.</p> <p>The Housing Strategy provides a comprehensive picture of the current housing needs and demands in Medway and sets out how we will counter existing and anticipated challenges.</p>	
<b>2. Who is intended to benefit, and in what way?</b>	<p>Medway residents, other Council departments, Housing Associations, statutory agencies, public sector partners and key agencies in the area where joint working will be of benefit to the community.</p> <p>The Housing Strategy provides actions to meet identified housing need.</p>	
<b>3. What outcomes are wanted?</b>	<p>The key priorities are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase the SUPPLY of suitable and affordable homes</li> <li>2. Improve the QUALITY of homes, environment and people's lives</li> <li>3. Promote SUSTAINABILITY by supporting people within their community</li> <li>4. Improve the FLEXIBILITY of accommodation</li> </ol>	

<b>4. What factors/forces could contribute/detract from the outcomes?</b>	Contribute <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Successful partnership working and commitment from partners</li> <li>○ Regeneration of Medway</li> <li>○ Funding opportunities</li> </ul>	Detract <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Changes in legislation, policy and initiatives</li> <li>● A decrease in the level of resources</li> <li>● Increasing housing need</li> </ul>
<b>5. Who are the main stakeholders?</b>	Residents, Housing Associations, developers, 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	
<b>6. Who implements this and who is responsible?</b>	Operational housing services and other Council departments delivered in partnership with a number of other stakeholders	

<b>Assessing impact</b>		
<b>7. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to racial/ethnic groups?</b>	YES	The Housing Strategy is fully inclusive regardless of race.
	NO	
<b>What evidence exists for this?</b>		
<b>8. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to disability?</b>	YES	Disability can impact on assistance offered if this places them in priority need. The strategy aims to support vulnerable residents. The strategy includes the need for the provision of specialist accommodation and identifies the need to undertake further research into the housing and support needs of vulnerable client groups.
	NO	
<b>What evidence exists for this?</b>		
<b>9. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to gender?</b>	YES	There is a possibility that more women could be assisted due to pregnancy and increased incidents of domestic abuse.
	NO	

What evidence exists for this?		
10. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>sexual orientation</i> ?	YES	Medway does not routinely collect information on this to monitor or identify issues directly related to housing.
	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 Housing Strategy is fully inclusive regardless of religion or belief.
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?		
12. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to people's age?	YES	The strategy proposes measures aimed at improving services for Young People and reduce the disadvantages they currently face in relation to housing.
	NO	The older population in Medway is increasing. The strategy considers the housing and support needs of older people and we have identified the need to undertake a review of accommodation for older people in Medway.
What evidence exists for this?		
13. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>being trans-gendered or transsexual</i> ?	YES	The Housing Strategy is fully inclusive regardless of being transgendered or transsexual.
	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	
	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	December 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?		
Signed (completing officer/service manager)	Date	
Rachel Britt, Housing Strategy and Partnerships Manager		

<b>Signed (service manager/Assistant Director)</b>	<b>Date</b>	
Matthew Gough, Head of Strategic Housing Services		

*NB: Remember to list the evidence (i.e. documents and data sources) used*