

Draft Medway Council Housing Strategy 2018-2022

Introduction

The Council Plan 2016/17 to 2020/21 states the councils three priorities are;

1. **Medway: A place to be proud of**
2. **Maximising regeneration and economic growth**
3. **Supporting Medway's people to realise their potential**

This strategy addresses housing related matters and shows the actions the council, and its partners, will take.

Medway Council looked at the problems, and what is needed. Meetings were held with a wide range of partner organisations, including landlords, supported housing providers, housing associations and health and agreed the three priorities in our strategy; these priorities are:

Deliver homes that meet the identified needs of Medway residents.



Affordable housing was examined through a Strategic Housing Needs Assessment and was discussed at the consultation event. Medway Council works hard to ensure delivery of affordable housing in line with housing policy. The council regularly checks progress against this and aims to achieve delivery of 25% affordable homes on all large developments.

Improve the quality of homes and lives



How good the available housing is, and making sure private rented properties in particular are up to standard, is also an issue. Medway Council understands the importance of living in good quality housing and how poor housing can have bad impacts on people's health. The council works with private landlords and tenants to make sure they get the information they need, giving advice on tenancy concerns and requiring landlords to keep their properties to an acceptable standard. The council also

supports vulnerable owner occupiers by recommending partners to provide advice to those seeking support around maintenance.

Ensure people can access housing and service to keep them independent

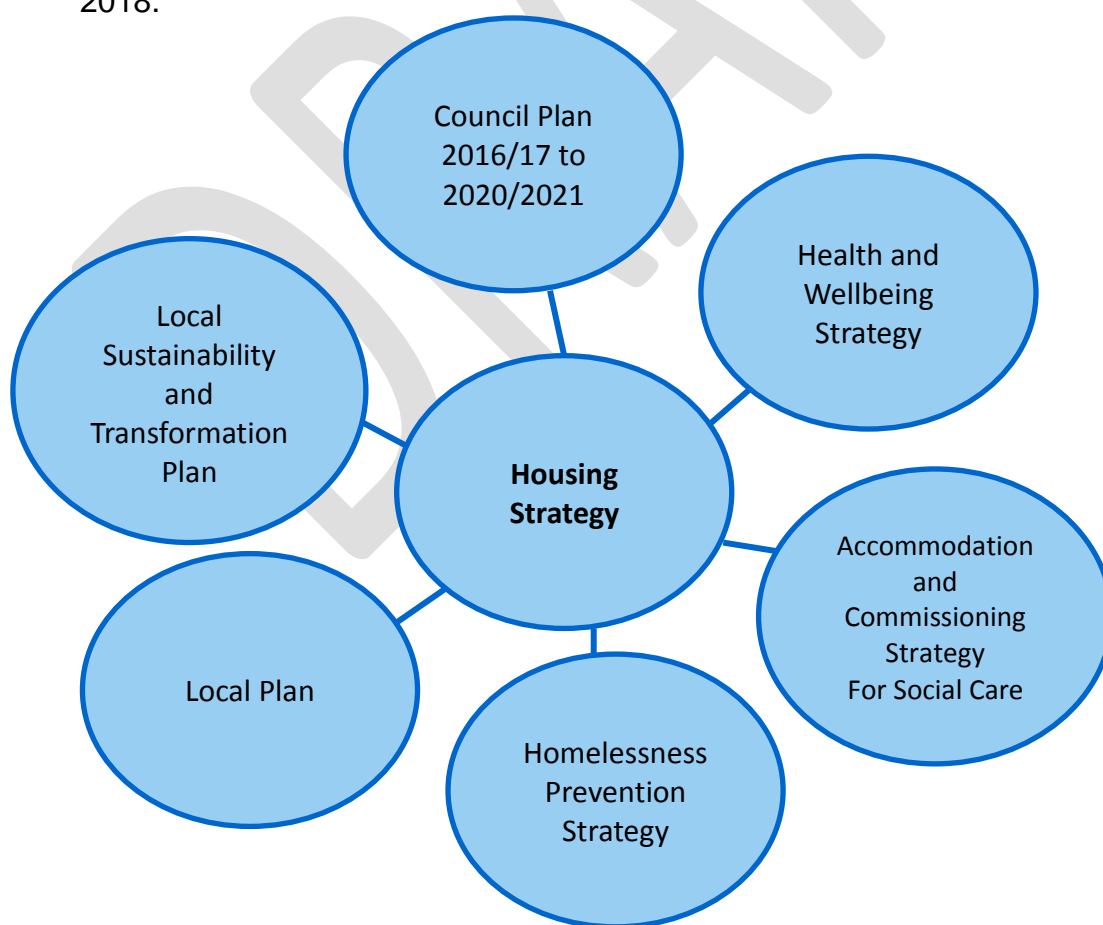


Medway Council understands how important support is to make sure vulnerable people can stay in their own home or find better accommodation to help them stay active and living independently. This may mean providing housing with support staff on site (supported housing) or having support staff visiting people in their home.

Medway Council is currently reviewing whether there is the right type and right amount of housing related support and other help for people to stay in their homes for longer.

The Housing Strategy aligns with the Homelessness Prevention Strategy and links to a range of council plans and strategies.

The Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017-2019 will be reviewed in line with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which came into force in April 2018.



Housing Affordability

The National Picture

Housing is changing across the nation. Children are staying at home with parents longer, house prices continue to rise and home ownership is reducing. The private rental sector is expanding - over the last 15 years, the number of families living in private rented accommodation has increased from 600,000 to 1.8 million. This increases both demand and average rental costs. For people on benefits, the amount households can claim is directly related to the amount of income they receive for housing costs. The government tells us how much housing benefit or universal credit can be paid. The amount which can be paid by the government towards rent is fixed to 2020 which means the increasing competitiveness in the private sector rental market will continue to outstrip this. Single people under the age of 35 usually only claim an amount to cover a room in a shared house.

The Local Picture

It is predicted that there will be 22% more people living in Medway by 2037. There will be more households in all age ranges but especially those aged 65 and older. Medway Council will need to account for this in our future plans. An example of this is our current program of extra care schemes with future developments being planned with our partners in Adult Social Care.

From data collected in 2015, Medway has twice the number of 16-18 year olds not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) compared to the Southeast average (7.5% compared with 3.7%). This rises to 24.4% among care leavers, making this group another priority in terms of housing provision to ensure that care leavers have a stable base to access training and employment. Children's services are commissioning a wider range of accommodation based and floating support services to facilitate this aim and provision is also included for this group in our Housing Related Support commissioning.

Medway's Early Help and Targeted Support Service has brought provision for vulnerable young people in house and are using this increased focus and ability to coordinate data in developing a strategy for 2020. This will build on the current offer which includes; providing advice and guidance within schools through the Trust Careers programme, supporting young people through pathways to Education, Training and Employment through Employ Medway, and utilising other partners to ensure there is a growing portfolio of opportunities for young people who are NEETs.

Overall, the Strategic Housing Market Assessment indicates the need for more housing of all types, but particularly flats and houses with two bedrooms.

Household Age Band	Number of households 2012	Number of households 2037	Percentage Change
15-24	4,166	4,387	5.3%
25-34	16,292	18,752	15.09%
35-44	20,767	23,752	14.3%
45-56	22,333	24,285	8.7%
55-59	9,051	10,897	20.3%
60-64	8,815	9,806	11.2%
65-74	14,438	22,004	52.4%
75-84	8,980	15,573	73.4%
85+	2,924	7,410	153.4%
Total	107,768	136,466	27.1%

Medway has more owner occupiers (70%) compared to the rest of the country (63%), but the numbers of owner occupiers are decreasing with private rented houses and flats increasing from 8% in 2001 to 17% of the total housing in 2011.

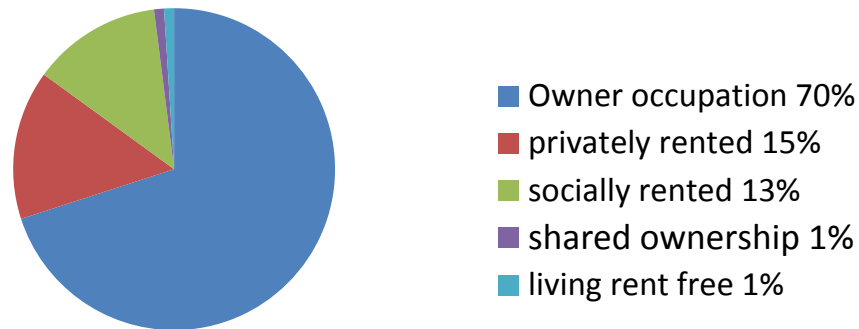
The average cost of renting in Medway has gone up steadily, particularly in high demand two bed homes. Government data shows rental increases of around 13% in Medway between September 2014 and September 2017.

The average property sale price in Medway was £244,906 in Dec 2017, up from £183,926 in December 2014. This represents an increase of over 33%.

Between 2012-2016, average wages in Medway increased by 7.4%

The median weekly Medway Resident earnings were £558.40 per week, or £29,039 per year, in 2017. A person could borrow £92,000 to £130,000 on this median annual salary for Medway Residents. However the average cost of a semi detached house in Medway was £273,626 or £213,638 for a terraced house in 2017. If a person earning the median salary was offered the largest likely mortgage amount to borrow they would require a deposit of £83,638 to be able to buy the average terraced house. However a couple, both earning the average resident weekly wage of £558.40, or £58,073.60 per year between them, would be able to borrow £174,000 to £246,500. This would indicate that the couple probably could afford a terraced home and possibly a semi-detached home with a deposit of £27,126 or more.

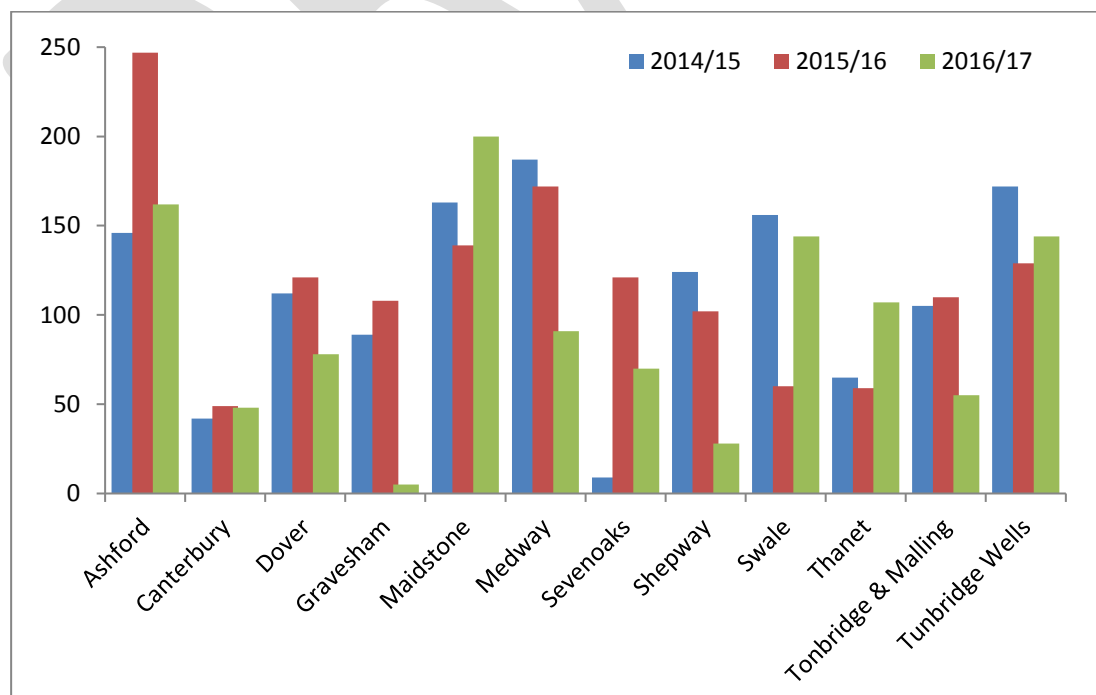
Percentage of households in each tenure In Medway



There is a small amount of social housing and an increasing demand. It is recognised that demand for this type of housing will always be greater than the supply to meet it. How much social housing there is may further reduce due to tenants purchasing under right to buy. For instance: in 2017/18 12 properties were bought under this scheme with an average value of £184,584. Applying the average discount for right to buy of £76,625 meant that an average of £107,958 per property was returned to the council to build replacement properties. Medway Council (like all councils) is also restricted by a cap on how much money the council can borrow. In light of this, Medway Council is maximising the number of social rented units the council is allowed to build, working with local registered providers to maximise affordable rented units and has set up a local initiative to increase units built under Medway Development Company Ltd.

Housing Stock Comparisons

The chart below shows the amount of affordable homes delivered in comparison to other local authorities in Kent



The chart below shows the levels of social housing in Medway compared with other local authorities

Area	Housing Stock Total	Affordable Housing Stock	Percentage
Shepway	50,720	5,370	10.6%
Canterbury	66,180	7,590	11.5%
Thanet	66,570	7,770	11.7%
Maidstone	68,560	8,850	12.9%
Dover	53,210	6,960	13.1%
Sevenoaks	49,550	6,530	13.2%
Dartford	44,100	5,930	13.4%
Swale	60,170	8,250	13.7%
Ashford	52,230	7,430	14.2%
Tonbridge Wells	49,880	7,220	14.5%
Brighton and Hove UA	126,800	18,380	14.5%
Medway	113,170	16,319	14.4%
Tonbridge and Malling	52,770	8,110	15.4%
Swindon UA	95,340	15,290	16.0%
Gravesham	42,840	7,390	17.3%
Milton Keynes UA	108,740	20,120	18.5%
Plymouth UA	116,690	22,510	19.3%
Bristol, City of UA	195,340	39,390	20.2%
Southampton UA	104,660	24,070	23.0%
Stoke-on-Trent UA	113,880	26,310	23.1%
Leicester UA	132,170	32,310	24.4%
Nottingham UA	134,850	36,220	26.9%

Local Housing Allowance (LHA)

LHA rates are based on the 30th percentile of the rents in the market area. This was frozen in 2016 for 4 years, so if local rents continue to rise (average rises have been between 2%-3% per year over the last five years) each year, the gap between the rent charged and the money which can be received in benefits increases. The table below shows the typical rent paid by people who claim housing benefit in Medway compared to the local housing allowance.

	Average Weekly Rent	LHA rate	Difference
Shared room rate	£93.36	£67.63	£25.73
1-bed	£128.24	£110.67	£17.57
2-bed	£159.72	£138.08	£21.64
3-bed	£175.24	£157.61	£17.63

The average rent shown is lower than the average of all private sector rents (as HB tenants are likely to either choose cheaper rents or have limited access to the more expensive end of the market). This illustrates that even at the more affordable end; there is still a significant shortfall between the weekly rent and housing costs which can be claimed.

Benefit Cap

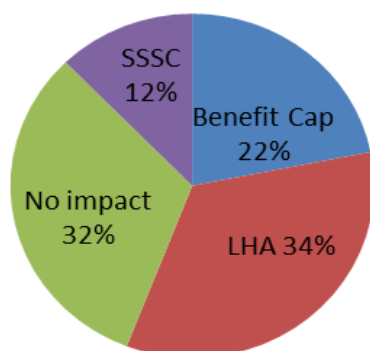
The overall Benefit Cap was reduced in November 2016 to £384.62 a week (£20,000 a year) for couples and lone parents. The new level means that some families with two or three children can have their housing benefit reduced as a result. Medway presently have over 100 households renting in the private sector affected by the cap. All affected households have been contacted by Medway Council staff and offered budgeting advice and support.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)

Since 2011-12 the government has provided additional funding through DHPs to help Local Authorities support customers affected by the welfare reforms (LHA rates, benefit cap, social sector size criteria – sometimes called the bedroom tax). The amount received to assist Medway households in 2017-18 was £843,891.00 The government contribution for DHPs in Medway for 2018/19 is reducing to £726,411

DHPs will remain with Local Authorities when Universal Credit comes in to Medway (the main rollout of this is in May 2018) and will be important for us to make sure people get assistance where needed.

The chart below illustrates the main causes for DHPs in 2017-18

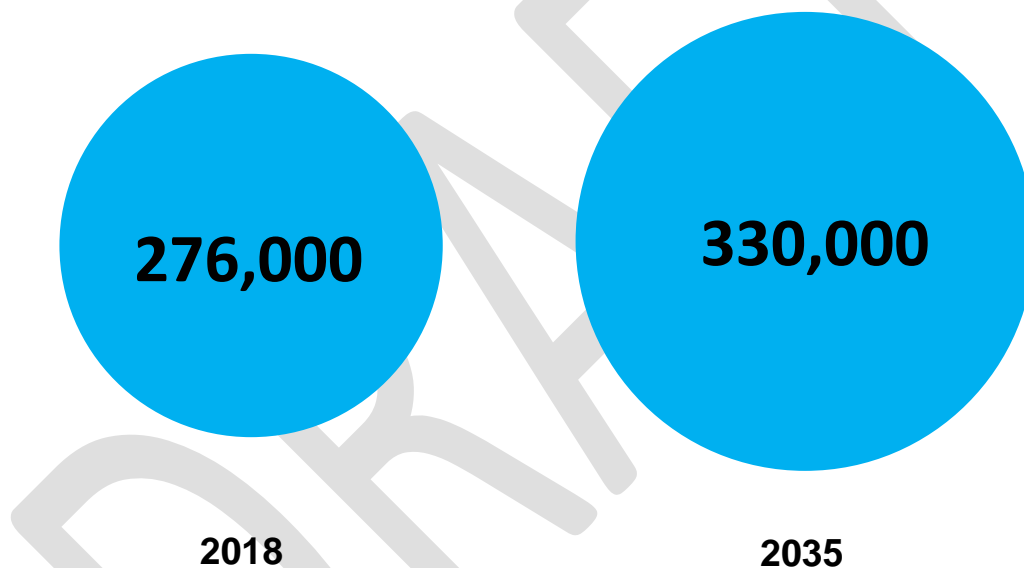


Between topping up Local Housing Allowance payments, contributions where Benefit Payments have been capped and Social Sector Size Criteria has impacted on payments received, benefit issues accounted for 68% of the money paid out to around 960 DHP applicants. The remaining category of 'no impact' refers to households where the shortfall is not linked to a specific benefit, but is indicative of the household not being able to manage their finances.

Priority 1 - Deliver homes that meet the identified needs of Medway's residents

1.1 Affordable housing delivery and housing need

Medway's population has steadily increased over the last 10 years across all age groups. Our current population is estimated at 276,000 and this is predicted to continue rising to 330,000 by 2035.



Medway Council cannot rely on affordable rented properties (usually called socially rented housing) to meet the need of this increasing population. Our current and estimated future needs have been assessed by carrying out a SHENA (Strategic Housing Economic Needs Assessment). This is used, alongside a database of planned housing developments, as a basis to predict the amount of affordable housing achievable in the Medway area. This calculation generates our current target of 204 units built a year. In 2017/18 132 units were delivered, and the prediction for 2018/19 is 250 affordable units.

The table below shows the amount of homes built over the last 5 years for affordable housing against the target of 204 and private housing against a target of 1000 a year.

Year	Affordable Units Completed	Private and Affordable Completions Combined	Percentage of Affordable Housing versus Private
2013/14	229	635	36%
2014/15	166	597	27%
2015/16	187	532	35%
2016/17	172	630	27%
2017/18	91*	675	13%
2013-2017	845	3069	27%

Medway Council works closely with developers, Registered Providers and Homes England to deliver new affordable homes, but it is clear that there will be a shortfall between affordable homes delivered and Medway Council's overall estimated housing requirement as set out in the SHENA (which is 721 affordable homes every year from 2017 to 2032). Social housing stock must therefore be used as flexibly as possible to ensure that housing needs can be met and make sure that people access as many different housing options as possible.

(*there was a significant shortfall in delivery in 2017/18. This was due to utility supply issues delaying development of a large scale site and also retrofitting of sprinklers to extra care schemes, which would otherwise have been delivered following the Grenfell Tower fire)

1.2 Delivery of affordable homes to meet need

The successful delivery of affordable housing in Medway is dependent upon the relationships that have been made with registered providers, funding bodies and developers and also on wider market conditions. The Council has a good track record in enabling the delivery of affordable homes and seeks to strengthen our established working relationships, knowledge and expertise to ensure that the development of affordable housing is maximised. Our housing enabling role monitors performance against our aim to deliver 204 additional affordable homes a year and secure at least £115,000 worth of investment for each new affordable housing unit per year.

1.3 Affordable housing funding

The model over recent decades has been one where housing grant dominated. The funding of affordable housing has changed over the last 5 years with Homes England recently focusing on the delivery of starter homes and shared ownership, instead of Affordable Rented units. This alongside the 4% rent reduction on affordable rented units announced in

the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 has led to a drop in the delivery of affordable rented units contributing to an increase in households in Temporary Accommodation. With the introduction of Medway's Local Plan in 2019 an increase in numbers of affordable units being delivered is expected. Homes England grant still has a significant role to play in funding delivery of affordable homes alongside other types of provision.

The current Homes England 2016-21 Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes Programme is still accepting new bids for funding via continuous market engagement. Medway Council will continue to work in partnership with Registered Providers and Homes England to monitor the delivery of our affordable housing programme.

Medway Council and Government policy is for affordable housing to be provided on schemes to meet housing need and create mixed communities. Viability on schemes is an increasing challenge in the enabling of new affordable housing. Where developers present viability assessments showing that a scheme will only be deliverable by having lower percentages of affordable housing, Medway Council tests this robustly. If it is agreed that the scheme would not be able to go ahead with the full expected percentage of affordable housing, Medway Council will accept a commuted sum in lieu of any units not delivered. Where these contributions have been accepted, they will be used to provide an additional affordable housing enabling tool. Commuted sums will be earmarked to support increased provision of affordable housing through our Affordable Housing Delivery Fund. To assess the viability of each bid for funding Medway Council will provide a bid proforma. This will be filled out by all applicants to assess the proposed affordable housing delivery against Medway Council's objectives and financial viability.

1.4 Other housing provision

Medway Council has ambitions to regenerate its urban areas, bringing them back into positive use and supporting economic growth and prosperity. Medway Council can directly contribute to this, particularly by releasing council owned land for development.

New homes will reinforce economic growth, support local businesses and revitalise these areas. Medway Council is making considerable investments into its urban spaces and the development of new housing is an integral part of this process.

Medway Development Company Ltd. has been created to deliver high quality housing and commercial returns to be reinvested to support the council's strategic priorities. Through this, Medway Council is able to deliver much needed housing, but also will control how new developments are delivered and ensure that they are built to a high standard, contributing to

the regeneration of urban centres and making Medway a place to be proud of. The first properties will be delivered in Chatham and are expected to eventually provide around 600 homes.

1.5 Actions needed

Medway Council will work with partner organisations, Registered Providers, Developers and Homes England to:

- Deliver 204 affordable homes per annum, across S106 sites and through land led schemes with Registered providers to meet the housing requirements of Medway's residents
- Work with planning to enable the development of mixed cohesive communities whilst securing at least 25% of newly built homes as affordable.
- Work with internal and external agencies to Support the delivery of specialist accommodation e.g. Extra Care or fully wheelchair compliant homes.
- Work with planning to aid the adoption of Medway Council's new Local Plan.

Priority 2 - Improve the quality of homes and people's lives

2.1 Housing affects health and other outcomes

Suitable housing conditions can prevent, or improve, physical and mental health problems. Accidents, injuries and falls happen less often where housing is good quality. The right type of housing reduces time off school due to poor health, and improves children's scores in schoolwork, especially where there is a quiet warm space to do homework. Children who do better at school are more likely to grow up to be in work and have a better income which leads to wider housing options and more chance of living in good quality housing.

2.2 Housing conditions have improved over time

Housing conditions have improved over time. Numbers of homes classified as below acceptable standards have reduced from 35% in 2006 to 19% in 2015. Homes with central heating have increased from 80% in 1996 to 92% in 2015 and homes have been made more energy efficient

The improvement in housing conditions has been greatest in the social rented sector, with owner occupiers next and private rented properties being more likely to need works done and central heating installed.

The Kent and Medway Warm Homes Scheme offers lower cost loft and cavity wall insulation and may be able to help with heating. This can help keep homes warm and reduce fuel bills and is for tenants of private rented homes and owner occupiers.

2.3 Maintenance for different housing types

Owner occupiers generally have control over whether to address their housing conditions. However, some may have difficulties paying the cost of the maintenance or not know what needs doing or worry about finding a suitable tradesperson to carry out the work needed. The Home Improvement Agency can tell owner occupiers what needs to be done, get fairly priced quotes and inspect works (the service charges a fee for this).

Tenants renting in the private sector should report any maintenance concerns to their landlord but sometimes are nervous about raising issues. Most landlords look after their properties but might not know about problems or not have enough money to make repairs or not want to get repairs done. Tenants can contact our private sector housing team to get concerns investigated and the team will work with landlords to ensure important maintenance work is carried out. Feedback would be sought from the landlords' forum on what other support they would find useful.

Tenants renting in social sector should report any maintenance concerns to their landlord. Landlords should do routine maintenance to keep properties

up to a good standard and they should respond to requests for repairs to be done as needed.

Some people choose to rent a room and single people under the age of 35 are usually only eligible for housing costs to cover a room in a shared house. Houses with more than one household are called houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). There are different types of HMOs but all have shared facilities, normally kitchens, bathrooms, corridors and staircases and fire alarm systems.

HMOs get more wear and tear, because more people live in them, and the building will require more management. Many are looked after well, but if not, neighbours will let us know regarding their poor appearance, rubbish or noise concerns. Medway Council licenses over 120 larger HMOs, (this means over three stories, with two or more households and five or more people). They are inspected to ensure they have enough toilets, bathing and cooking facilities and are properly managed. Complaints about all types of HMOs are investigated and work done with landlords ensures they maintain and manage their buildings. The government are working to change the law so that HMOs of any height will need to be licensed from October 2018.

2.4 Support for landlords and tenants

Medway Council promotes good landlords and letting agents through our accreditation scheme and a scheme is run for people looking for accommodation to give them the right skills to cope with the responsibilities of being a tenant.

Tenant Accreditation Scheme

- This gives tenants information on their rights and responsibilities and when they finish they get a certificate to show they understand how to be a good tenant. Landlords have given positive feedback on the scheme and like to have accredited tenants.

Landlord Accreditation Scheme

- This shows that landlords have shown that they have the right skills to run a successful rental business and provide good quality, safe accommodation. Benefits include referrals from local universities and support from Medway Council.

Landlords' forum

- The forum is open to landlords and letting agents and provides useful information and a space for debate and get questions answered. We also provide a landlord hotline to give advice and guidance to landlords and try and nip any problems in the bud.

2.5 Infrastructure

Medway Council recognises that housing must be supported by adequate infrastructure. This includes roads, schools, access to green spaces, health facilities, bus stops, etc. Section 106 agreements are written to help meet

the needs of the local community by getting contributions from housing developers. Medway Council will make sure these contributions are fair for the size of the proposed development, so services can meet the needs of the new residents without being too much of a drain on existing facilities and taking services from other residents in the area.

2.6 Actions needed

Medway Council works with partner organisations to support people who own or rent their home to keep them in good repair by;

- Promoting services that help homeowners identify the right works, get quotes from suitable tradespeople and inspect the works to ensure they are good.
- Promoting the handypersons scheme for minor works
- Investigating when tenants tell us they need landlords to do maintenance work
- Promoting the Warm Homes Scheme to homeowners and private tenants to get help with subsidised insulation for their homes

Landlords and tenants are supported to understand their rights and responsibilities by our services;

- Giving tenants the information they need to run their tenancy well by providing the tenant accreditation scheme that gives prospective tenants a certificate demonstrating their understanding.
- Giving landlords the information they need to offer tenancies and maintain their properties through our landlord accreditation scheme
- Keeping landlords up to date by providing the Landlords Forum with the National Landlords Association.
- Continuing to monitor levels of empty properties in Medway. This is currently approximately 0.87% of the housing stock. This is slightly higher than the Kent average of 0.71%.

These actions are included in our Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017-19

Priority 3 - People can access housing and services to keep them independent

Everyone needs housing that is secure, warm and safe. Lots of people in Medway have challenges which mean they need help to find suitable housing. Other people find that their needs have changed and they may not be able to stay in their homes without support. Medway Council want to make sure that they know what people need so they can plan to provide services to allow people in Medway to live independent lives and reach their potential.

3.1 Supported housing for people who are vulnerable

The following types of supported housing are provided in Medway

Short term supported accommodation – these schemes can be specific to a group of people with housing and support needs, or more generic. The accommodation is usually provided for a period of six to 18 months before move on into settled accommodation.

Homelessness Supported Living

- These services help people who have lost their homes and may be sofa surfing or sleeping rough. As well as helping people with looking after themselves, learning skills and managing money, the service works with other agencies to bring in support around drugs and alcohol or mental and physical health needs.

Young Peoples' Schemes

- Supported living and foyers. These are for people aged 16-25 who have had to leave home. In the schemes young people learn how to look after themselves, manage their money and get ready to live on their own. As well as this the foyers get young people into training and volunteering and get them ready for the world of work

Domestic Abuse Refuge

- There are two in Medway. These provide safe secure housing for women and their families who need to be moved from their area due to risk of violence

Vulnerable Young People and Children

- Supported Accommodation provides housing based solutions for vulnerable young people and children, ranging from High (24hr staffed), Medium (daytime staffing) to Low (visiting support). In most cases the young people who are living within a supported accommodation placement are looked after or have been looked after by Childrens' Social Services. This includes temporary accommodation whilst the local authority works to support the young person in returning home

Ex-offenders Supported Living

- People leaving prison can struggle to find housing. This can make it more likely they will reoffend. These services try and stop this by giving the more vulnerable ex offenders a stable base to build up their living skills and get into volunteering and training ready to work and move on into their own accommodation.

Long term supported accommodation – these schemes are specifically designated for certain groups of people with care and support needs, which have to be provided for to allow the housing provision to work.

Mental Health

- Supported Accommodation encompasses a range of services designed to help clients with mental health needs and enables them to continue living in their communities, independently. Supported accommodation is for people over the age of 18 years. It consists of housing and support. A person will enter into a tenancy arrangement and access tailored support to suit their individual needs and mental health needs. This could range from 5 hours of support per week to 24 hours support per week dependent on their needs.

Learning Difficulties

- Supported Accommodation encompasses a range of services designed to help disabled citizens retain their independence in their local community. Supported accommodation is for people over the age of 18 years. It consists of housing and support. A person will enter into a tenancy arrangement and access tailored support to suit their individual needs. This could range from 5 hours of support per week to 24 hours support per week dependent on their needs

Sheltered Housing

- The minimum age is typically over 65 and the schemes are sometimes described as Retirement Housing. People will either have their own flat or bedsit and there will be a communal lounge and activities may be organised. Support provision is mainly low level from visiting staff and focuses around helping older people to manage their flat or room and identifying if other services need to be brought in.

Extra Care Housing

- Medway's Extra Care housing is available to people having personal care and housing related support needs. Modern and affordable one or two-bedroom apartments adapted for your care and support needs, communal facilities including a lounge, café, hair salon, computer and internet facilities, laundry, assisted bathrooms, guest accommodation for visitors and onsite staff to offer housing-related support (e.g. assistance with managing the home, advice on benefits, form filling etc.) and personal care support such as help with washing, dressing, preparing snacks and meals, laundry, shopping, reminders to take medication etc.

Kent and Medway Transforming Care Partnership are working on adopting a Transforming Care Framework. Transforming Care is a three year project which involves identifying a cohort of patients being cared for in inpatient settings, such as secure beds/specialist hospital beds, with a Learning Disability, Autism Spectrum Condition and offending behaviours.

The framework is being developed in partnership with providers and agencies with a proven track record of delivering personalised packages of support for individuals to allow them to step down from secure services into community living with support.

As corporate parent for looked after children, Medway Council will ensure that suitable housing provision is considered for all children and young people leaving care. Housing, children's services commissioning and the leaving care team will work together to agree actions to develop a range of options to meet their needs, from supported accommodation to move on.

3.2 Services to prevent people losing their homes or stay in their home for longer

People can lose their homes for many reasons. Often there are things that can be done to stop this happening. Floating support can work with people in their homes to help during difficult times and prevent tenancy breakdown. Other times people's needs change and some physical alterations made to the property can help them keep their independence.

Generic

- This can help people with sorting out welfare benefits, getting advice about debt, helping people with disputes with neighbours, helping people access GPs, etc.

Domestic Abuse

- People can be at risk of losing their home through Domestic Abuse. Support can be given to help them get back control of their money, giving them emotional support, helping them to get legal advice around tenancies, etc.

Complex Needs

- Some people need extra help around things such as drug and alcohol use, help with mental health issues, getting skills back after coming out of prison, etc.

Sanctuary Scheme

- Some people who have suffered domestic abuse need their home to be more secure. The scheme can help by offering adaptations such as replacement door locks, motion sensor lighting, security door bars, etc.

Adaptions

- Assistance can be given by adapting properties. This is usually after an Occupational Therapist makes recommendations and has to be agreed by the landlord. Examples include putting in wet rooms instead of a bath, stair lifts, putting in ramps, etc.

3.3 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) came into force on 3rd April 2018, increasing the Authority's homelessness duties. These include:

- Extending the duty to provide homelessness advisory services.
- A duty to seek to prevent or relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants who are either homeless, or threatened with homelessness within 56 days.
- For all applicants that Medway Council have a duty towards, staff will work with them to agree a personal housing plan (PHP). This is a written plan agreeing steps the council will take and steps the applicant will take to prevent them becoming homeless.
- Responsibility for setting up local procedures to receive and manage homelessness referrals from certain public authorities.

In order to meet these new duties, and to ensure that a quality homelessness service is delivered to our customers, the following steps have been implemented:

- Reviewing advisory services, ensuring that they offer comprehensive, tailored advice and information, to meet the needs of all persons in Medway, and in particular those groups, e.g. persons leaving care, hospital, prison, or the armed forces, who are most vulnerable;
- Investing in a new IT solution to assist us to efficiently manage homeless applications in accordance with HRA;
- Recruiting more staff to assist us meet the significant extension of our obligations under the Act; and;
- Restructuring our housing options service to enable us to assess and provide all eligible homeless applicants with a personalised housing plan, and to ensure that staff are able to focus on seeking to prevent or relieve homelessness at the earliest possible stage.

Work has been undertaken to establish and strengthen our working arrangements with partners, with this facilitating appropriate referrals and early interventions and maximising the effectiveness of our joint working with partners for the benefit of our customers.

These actions are all being done in line with Medway Council's Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017-2019 which can be reviewed for greater detail on specific actions to positively address homelessness across Medway.

3.4 What else are we doing this year?

A review is being carried out around who needs housing related support in Medway. This will mean decisions can be made about the most effective way to spend our budget, as demand will continue to be high and it will be challenging to meet these needs within our resources. Account needs to be taken of how the needs of people in Medway are changing, so this provides an opportunity to see how where services can be transformed and make use of alternative models of support.

Our review will determine whether Medway Council has the right mix of supported living and floating support, and are these covering the right groups of people, and if not, how to shape services to best to meet the needs in Medway. These services will be put out to advert, known as tendering, in the near future so it is important that what is going to be put in place will be the best possible mix of services.

3.5 Out of area placements

Due to Medway's proximity with areas of London and Kent which have higher average rents, Medway has been used as an affordable alternative for local authorities looking to find housing solutions for their residents. Work has already been done to determine those already placed in Medway and is monitored closely to understand the size of the issue. Where this is not sustainable this data will allow us to have discussions, with authorities placing people in Medway, to challenge this practice.

3.6 Actions needed

Work with partner organisations to make sure Medway Council has the right kind of supported housing by:

- Directly commissioning short term services which meet the need of vulnerable people who may otherwise be homeless.
- Supporting Adult Social Care and Children's Services in their commissioning of long term housing solutions.

Work to make sure that people get the support to remain in their own homes by:

- Commissioning a variety of tenancy sustainment services which are delivered to people in their own homes.
- Implementing the practice enshrined in the Homelessness Reduction Act to ensure more households are prevented from losing their accommodation.

Work to make sure that people are able to stay in their own homes by:

- Providing adaptations to allow people to stay in their home as they become frail or to assist with mobility and other needs,
- Giving advice and practical help to people suffering Domestic Abuse to make their accommodation more secure

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Action Plan for Housing Strategy

Priority 1. Deliver homes that meet the identified needs of Medway residents

Reference	Action and priority level	Resources	Target/Outcomes	Timescales
1.01	<p>Deliver at least 204 additional affordable homes per annum. Secure at least 25% of newly built homes as affordable on any site meeting the Council’s size threshold. Work with Registered Providers and Homes England to secure an annual investment in affordable housing of £20m</p> <p>High</p>	Housing Strategy and Partnership team, Planning service.	Continual flow of affordable housing units delivered proportionate to overall new housing units delivered. Review to confirm units meet expected volumes and investment levels.	Quarterly progress reports.
1.02	<p>Achieve a balanced mix of affordable housing unit sizes</p> <p>High</p>	Housing Strategy and Partnership team, Registered Housing Providers	<p>40% 1 bed 30% 2 bed 20% 3 bed 5% 4 bed 5% 5 bed to meet needs of Medway population in line with Strategic Housing Market Assessment</p>	Report annually in May
1.03	<p>Achieve a balanced approach with regards to tenure with 60% Affordable Rented homes and 40% Shared Ownership</p>	Housing Strategy and Partnership team, Registered Housing Providers	60% Affordable Rented 40% Shared Ownership which has been established as the optimal	Report annually in May

	Medium		mix to maximise number of units delivered	
1.04	Support and develop a delivery programme for Extra Care Specialist and Sheltered Housing to meet demand Medium	Housing Strategy and Partnership team, Adult Social Care, Registered Housing Providers	Delivery programme researched, drafted and agreed with relevant providers to meet needs of ageing population and reduce numbers of people needing to access residential care. This includes delivery of an additional 60 bed scheme by 2022.	Reviewed every two years
1.05	Spend monies received as commuted affordable housing sums effectively to deliver additional affordable homes. Low	Housing Strategy and Partnerships Team	Funds must be spent within five Years of receipt in accordance with S106 requirements	Report six monthly on affordable housing projects delivered.
1.06	Provide new residential developments, to support the regeneration of Medway's urban areas. High	Medway Development Company Ltd.	Provide 600 new homes within 5 years, 250 in first two years.	Report number of homes provided annually in May
1.07	Develop a new local plan for Medway Medium	Planning Team	This will allow planning decisions to be made more effectively and allow achievement of affordable housing targets	Local plan to be agreed in principle by end of 2018, with expected adoption by end of 2019.
1.08	Infrastructure to support housing growth Seek funding to provide road, rail and social infrastructure.	Regeneration Delivery Team	Seek funding e.g. to unlock sustainable housing, allowing construction of additional homes in line with the local plan.	Annual report from External Investment Manager of funding received. Planning

	New developments to contribute to roads, schools, etc. High		Ensure appropriate S106 contributions are received from developers.	team quarterly report on S106 contributions.
1.09	Review of our allocations policy Low	Homechoice Team	Ensure allocations policy is reflective of existing and emerging corporate priorities and complies with changes to statutory frameworks and existing best practice.	March 2019
1.10	Develop proposals to diversify the existing temporary accommodation offer, incorporating potential demand for accommodation needed by local care teams, including those with no recourse to public funding and those found to be intentionally homeless. Medium	Housing Strategy and Partnerships Team	Proposals paper produced for discussion at DMT.	March 2020

Priority 2. Improve the quality of homes and people's lives

Reference	Action and priority level	Resources	Target/Outcomes	Timescales
2.01	The Home Improvement Agency to promote its specification, quotation and inspection service for able to pay owner occupiers Low	Peabody Home Improvement Agency	Homeowners supported to get repairs completed. Information on the HIA website and social media messages on this service. Annual report of number of times service provided.	Ongoing, numbers of repairs monitored annually in April
2.02	Promote the Handypersons service to help vulnerable people get minor works done Low	Peabody Home Improvement Agency	Number of vulnerable people accessing this service maintains or increases. Information on the HIA website and messages we can share on Medway Council social media on this service. Publicise through A Better Medway champions. Annual report of number of times service provided categorised by the type of work done.	Ongoing, numbers monitored annually in April
2.03	Develop proposals for a Home Improvement Loan Scheme that provides repayable loans for low income vulnerable owner occupying households	Adaptations and Assistance Team. Peabody Home Improvement Agency	Have an options document in place for decision/agreement.	March 2019

	to pay essential maintenance works via revolving pot of money Low	Existing revolving Home Improvement Loan fund.		
2.04	Requests for service regarding poor housing conditions investigated and appropriate actions taken High	Private Sector Housing Team	600 private sector properties improved per year as a result of council intervention	Ongoing, monitored quarterly
2.05	Promote Kent wide Warm Homes scheme http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/campaigns-and-events/warm-homes that provides subsidised home insulation via landlords' forum and social media. Low	Private Sector Housing Team. Communications Team. Housing Strategy and Partnership Team	Monitor the number of referrals received for Medway and the number cavity wall and loft insulation installations made by the scheme each year.	Annual monitoring
2.06	Monitor progress against actions in the Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017-19 High	As detailed in Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017-19	As detailed in Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2017-19	Quarterly monitoring meetings diarised
2.07	Ensure collaborative working agreement between Public Health, Social Care and Housing is reviewed and kept up to date. Medium	Public health, Adult Social Care and Housing	Monitor progress against actions detailed in CWA	Actions reviewed six monthly
2.08	Ensure all licensable HMOs are identified and appropriate actions taken to ensure licences are in place. Medium	Housing Strategy and Partnerships Team, Private Rental Sector Team	Mechanism for identifying properties put in place and enforcement carried out by PRS team	Review practice to expand HMO licensing to cover two storey properties in line with legislation. Oct 2018 and monitored quarterly.

2.09	Review enforcement policy in line with the Government's Enforcement Concordat and with regard to the Housing and Planning Act 2016 Low	Senior Manager in Private Rental Sector Service	Ensure updated policy is in place and published on Medway Council website.	October 2019
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Priority 3: Ensure residents have access to suitable homes and support

Reference	Action and priority level	Resources	Target/Outcomes	Timescales
3.01	Increase GP practice awareness of housing services including referring suitable patients to Occupational Therapy service, floating support, housing options, etc. Medium	Public Health, Adaptations and Assistance Team, OT team, Housing Strategy and Partnerships Team	Liaise with identified GP practice managers to pilot a process to inform them about relevant services and how to refer etc.	Five practices by Jan 2020 – then evaluate success of the pilot.
3.02	Develop proposals around further housing initiatives to make best use of existing resources. Explore what has been successful in other local authorities, particularly solutions which we do not currently have in Medway. Examples of this would be the Home share initiative, modular homes, etc. Low	Housing Strategy and Partnerships Team	Examples of innovative practice identified and their relevance for Medway assessed. A report written giving details of practice relevant for Medway and recommendations made.	By December 2018 By April 2019
3.03	Work closely with colleagues in adult social care and partnership commissioning around identifying housing options available for individuals with complex needs mapped by the services working towards the aims of e.g. the transforming care partnership. Medium	Adult Social Care, and Housing Strategy and Partnerships Team	Support work of adult social care and partnership commissioning	Ongoing with a review annually in May
3.04	Revise our move on from supported housing pathways to match the realities of the housing market in Medway and	Housing Strategy and Partnerships Team, Home Choice Team,	Agree pathways from supported accommodation making full use of private	December 2018

	<p>ensure our resources are used effectively</p> <p>Ensure that expectations are understood and are managed in line with the availability social housing and private housing options. Communicate this to referrers, supported housing providers, applicants and the general public. Work with our communications department on a wider messaging strategy around options for housing.</p> <p>High</p>	<p>Communications Team, supported housing providers,</p>	<p>rented sector and social rented options. Ensure referrers, supported housing providers, applicants and the public has access to this information via forums, social media and our website.</p> <p>Providers to report annual data on the types of general needs accommodation accessed when leaving supported accommodation</p>	<p>April 2019 and reviewed each following April.</p> <p>Annual report from supported housing providers</p>
3.05	<p>Review the way Medway provides Disabled Facilities Grants to enable people with disabilities to access their home and essential facilities within it.</p> <p>Medium</p>	<p>Peabody Home Improvement Agency, Aids and Adaptions Team. DCLG funding.</p>	<p>Ensure the service meets Medway's corporate objectives. Review current levels of 75% of referrals to Peabody, 25% dealt within DFG team. Last year's overall total 143.</p>	<p>Monitored quarterly.</p>
3.06	<p>Provide a Sanctuary Scheme to install security measures in the homes domestic abuse survivors</p> <p>Low</p>	<p>Peabody Home Improvement Agency,</p>	<p>Measures installed in 95% of suitable homes within 5 working days of inspection. At least 90% of service users report feeling safer as a result.</p>	<p>Monitored quarterly.</p>
3.07	<p>Review our current provision of Housing Related Support Services (supported</p>	<p>Housing Strategy and Partnerships Team</p>	<p>Confirm ongoing outcomes framework for HRS</p>	<p>April 2021</p>

	housing and floating support). Explore models of support provision and outcomes framework through stakeholder, service user and market engagement. High		services. Confirm service model in line with needs and commission new services.	
3.08	Monitor the level of out of area placements into Medway Low	Housing Benefit, Housing Strategy and Partnerships Team	Ensure we understand the volumes and originating authority of people being placed into Medway. Develop a case for response to originating authorities where appropriate.	April 2019 and annual monitoring.
3.09	Review pathways and understand the ongoing housing requirements for care leavers. High	Children's Services, Housing Strategy and Partnerships Team	Agreed plan in place between Housing and Children's Services.	April 2019