



Eastbourne Borough Council  
Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy  
(Draft)  
2022-2027

DRAFT

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1. Our vision



Prevent – to reduce the incidence of homelessness

Intervene – to reduce the impact where homelessness has occurred



Sustainable solutions – to promote housing options and effective support services

## 2. Foreword

Eastbourne is a great town in which to live and work, but also a town in which too many local households struggle to find good quality housing at a price they can afford. The recent surge in house prices has resulted in the cost of an average home in Eastbourne rising to over ten times the local salary, and high prices have had a knock on impact on rents, which have risen by 22 percent over the past five years. The high costs of both home ownership and renting severely restricts the housing options that those on low, and increasingly so those on moderate incomes, have in the local market. Clearly, the current cost of living crisis is only making matters worse. As a result, the demand for help is high, and over the course of the past year the housing needs team has dealt with over 1,400 enquiries, from households who needed housing advice, were at risk of losing their home, or were already homeless.

Rough sleeping is the most acute symptom of housing need, and in common with other coastal areas, its prevalence in Eastbourne is relatively high compared to similarly sized towns. Where it occurs rough sleeping has a devastating impact on the health and wellbeing of the individuals concerned, and over the past few years the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) programme has worked hard to deliver outreach services that identify those sleeping rough and connect them with support services. It is welcome news that the RSI team have recently secured a three-year funding settlement from Central Government, that will allow this valuable work to continue.

Reducing the incidence of homelessness and ending rough sleeping is a key priority for the Council. This strategy sets out the approach to achieving this goal over the next five years, by setting out a framework focused on; preventing homelessness; intervening effectively when it occurs; and putting in place sustainable solutions to build more affordable homes, secure more supported housing for rough sleepers and those facing disadvantage; and provide support services to improve re-housing options. This framework is supported by an action plan designed to be updated across the duration of the strategy, to reflect progress, changes to operating context and new funding opportunities. Local partner agencies have helped formulate this plan and their valued contribution is key to helping deliver the outcomes it contains.

The impact of Covid-19 has brought home the fundamentals that matter the most to households and communities across the town, and as we face new challenges ahead, it is clearer than ever that providing good quality affordable housing in the town, is key to helping all residents feel safe and secure.

**Councillor Alan Shuttleworth - Lead Cabinet Member for Direct Assistance Services**

## 3. Introduction

- 3.1. The demand for homelessness services has increased steadily over the past 5 years, and during the past year, the Council's housing needs team received more than 1,300 requests for advice and assistance from family and single households seeking help. The impact of homelessness has a devastating impact on those directly affected, a social cost that extends into the wider community, and a financial cost that draws agency resources away from other key services.
- 3.2. This strategy introduces a framework that sets out to reduce the impact that homelessness has on local individuals and households, and the priorities the Council will pursue to help do so.

### What is homelessness?

- 3.3. Those who present as homeless do not have to be sleeping on the streets or lack a roof at the time they ask for help. Households can also be considered homeless if they are:
  - Having to stay with friends or family.
  - Staying in a hostel, night shelter or bed and breakfast accommodation.
  - At risk of violence or abuse in their current home.
  - Living in poor or unsafe conditions that cannot be rectified.
  - Leaving an institution such as a prison or hospital, or the care system, with nowhere to go.
- 3.4. This strategy uses a definition of homelessness that includes both rough sleepers, single people and families that are threatened with, or present as homeless. In short, any household (individual, couple, or a family) that find themselves without a safe or secure place to call home.

### How has this strategy been developed?

- 3.5. The relevant legislation has been adhered to in formulating and modifying this strategy. It has been prepared in line with the statutory requirements set out in the Homelessness Act 2002, Section 1(4) requires housing authorities to publish a new homelessness strategy, based on the results of a homelessness review, within the period of five years beginning with the day on which their last homelessness strategy was published. In addition, we have had regard to the Council's Allocation Scheme, Tenancy Policy, and the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities in England 2018, last updated 1<sup>st</sup> June 2022.
- 3.6. The homelessness review, undertaken earlier this year, provided an up-to-date picture of the:
  - Current and likely future levels of homelessness across Eastbourne.
  - Activities carried out & support available to prevent homelessness and those experiencing it.
  - Level of resources made available locally to tackle homelessness.
- 3.7. The wider public, local voluntary and statutory partners, were invited to comment on the findings of the review, and their responses have been used to inform the shape and direction of this strategy, which sets out how the Council will work with others to; bolster activities to prevent homelessness occurring; intervene effectively when it occurs; and deliver sustainable plans to support re-housing options.

## 4. Context

### National context

4.1 The operating environment in which local authorities must deliver services to reduce homelessness continues to provide a number of key challenges. Increasing house prices, rising private sector rents, and the reduced incomes households face as a result of the pandemic, continue to drive the high number of local households accessing services, some of whom need to be placed in emergency or temporary accommodation. Key issues to highlight include:

- **Covid-19.** Over the past two years the pandemic has, not unsurprisingly, had a significant impact on central Government strategy. At a local level, this has resulted in teams re-focusing services by; providing emergency accommodation to rough sleepers as part of the 'Everyone In' initiative; putting in place additional safeguards to help maintain social distancing in temporary accommodation; and delivering remote services as standard. A ban on private rented sector evictions, in place since the first national lockdown, expired at the end of May 2021. Along with the broader economic impacts of the pandemic, this has increased the level of demand on homelessness services and the potential impacts will need to be monitored in the months ahead.
- **Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017.** The implementation of this Act, whilst putting in place welcome additional protections for those at risk of homelessness, has introduced extra demands on the work of local housing needs teams. The changes it introduced included:
  - A new 'prevention duty', requiring local authorities to take reasonable steps to assist those likely to become homeless earlier, so within 56, rather than 28 days.
  - A new 'relief duty', which applies to those already homeless when they ask the local authority for help. It requires local authorities to provide support for 56 days.
  - A requirement to carry out a holistic assessment of the applicant's housing and support needs, then set out how these will be addressed in a 'personal housing plan'.

The combined impact of these changes has been to increase the overall number of applicants seeking help, alter the profile of those qualifying for assistance (in particular more single applicants and more households with complex needs are coming forward under the new duties) and increase the number of applicants placed in temporary accommodation.

- **Domestic Abuse Act 2021.** Under this new Act, being accepted as homeless due to domestic abuse directly confers priority need. This is a welcome change that will provide re-assurance and certainty for individuals and their families presenting as homeless because of domestic abuse, and will simplify the decision-making process for officers. The Act also introduces a new definition of domestic abuse and requires that housing authorities, should provide a secure lifetime tenancy to applicants who held a similar security of tenure in the past.
- **National Rough Sleeping Strategy.** In August 2018, the Government published their current plans for tackling rough sleeping. It comprises of three parts, or 'pillars':
  - Prevention: understanding issues that lead to rough sleeping and providing support.
  - Intervention: helping rough sleepers with swift support tailored to their individual needs.
  - Recovery: supporting people in finding a new home and rebuilding their lives.

The three pillars of the strategy, along with the funding received via the Rough Sleeper Initiative, set out to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and eradicate it completely by 2027.

## Local context

4.2 Property prices in Eastbourne are high, with the recent surge in market activity has pushing up the average cost of a home (in quarter 3, 2020) to £305,000.<sup>1</sup> Such high prices set the context for a range of issues that restrict the access that many households have to local housing markets. These include:

- **High house prices and rents.** House price ratios, which compare the relationship between average property prices and average earnings, showed that by autumn 2020, median property prices were over ten times the local full-time salary<sup>2</sup>. High house prices have a knock-on effect on private rents, the high level of which continue to challenge the ability of local households to secure suitable housing. By September 2021, the median rent (all bed sizes) stood at £825<sup>3</sup> per month, a rise of 22 percent over the past five years. A recent search on Rightmove<sup>4</sup> illustrated the fact that the majority of private rents charged in Eastbourne are above the Local Housing Allowance (LHA, which cap levels of welfare benefit subsidy that can be claimed). Of the 68 advertised homes, only one was available at a rent below the respective LHA rates, a 1-bed home unsuitable for families with children. With LHA rates once again frozen, this picture is unlikely to change anytime soon.
- **Deprivation.** Indices of Multiple Deprivation, last published by the Office for National Statistics in 2019, provide a snapshot of relative deprivation in each locality in England, by looking at a range of factors including income, employment, education, health, and barriers to housing. These are combined into a single index. Overall, Eastbourne ranks as 106 out of 317 local authorities (where 1 is the most deprived) in England and contains four localities, known as Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) that fall within the 10 percent most deprived, the lowest ranking of which is Hampden Park. Eastbourne also has 12 (LSOAs) that are amongst the 20% most deprived in England, four more than in 2015.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, by the end of 2019/20, more than 4,000 children were living in low-income families, 18.2 percent of all children in Eastbourne.
- **Housing tenure and supply.** The total housing stock of Eastbourne numbered 49,125 in 2020, an increase of 2,488 homes, a rise of 4% over the past ten years. This was driven largely by new private sector provision (1,781 homes) and a smaller increase in housing association homes (421 homes). Overall, the growth in social housing stock has been small, amounting to a net increase of only 62 homes in the past ten years, once Right to Buy losses are taken into account. New affordable housing supply is an area that requires more focus if provision is to be expanded to help meet demand.
- **Housing demand and availability.** The demand for social housing is high and there are currently over 1100 households waiting for homes on the council's housing register, each of whom meets one or more categories of preferential need. The availability of social housing, on the other hand, is restricted in terms of both new supply and the number of existing homes that become available to re-let. During 2020/21 a total of 107<sup>6</sup> council homes were let to new tenants, which represents a stock

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<sup>1</sup> HYPERLINK "<https://www.ons.gov.uk/filter-outputs/2d38c8d0-e5a5-459f-a0fa-3dfba9a70678>" [House price statistics for small areas in England and Wales – Mean Property Sales Values – Office for National Statistics – June 2021](#).

<sup>2</sup> [Ratio of house prices to residence based earnings – Office for National Statistics – March 2021](#).

<sup>3</sup> [Office of National Statistics - Private rental summary statistics June 2021](#).

<sup>4</sup> [Rightmove](#) search conducted March 2022.

<sup>5</sup> [East Sussex in figures – Indices of Deprivation 2020](#).

<sup>6</sup> Government LA Housing Statistics - [Local authority housing statistics data returns for 2020 to 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) – Published Feb 2022.

turnover of just 2.9% percent. With only a further 33<sup>7</sup> housing association homes let to those waiting on the housing register, there remains a significant shortfall between the levels of supply and demand.

- 4.3 The combined impact of high housing costs and restricted affordable housing in both the private and social rented housing sectors, presents a real housing challenge to residents of Eastbourne. These challenges restrict the housing choices of many households on middle incomes and severely restrict the choices of those on low and unstable incomes, many of whom have to compromise on the standard and suitability of the homes they can secure. These inequalities will continue to have a disproportionate impact on young people, single households, and those reliant on welfare benefits.

## Strategic fit

- 4.4 This strategy contributes directly to the housing ambitions set out in Eastbourne's Corporate Plan 2020-2024, which sets out five key priorities targeted at:

- Delivering good access to housing that meets modern standards.
- Providing safe, well managed and decent homes.
- Regenerating locations and deliver more housing.
- Promoting housing that sustains health & wellbeing.
- Addressing the causes of homelessness.

- 4.5. In addressing homelessness, the plan sets out goals to; focus on prevention; support households at risk of homelessness; and work in partnership to address the number of rough sleepers in the town.

## 5. Summary of Findings from the Homelessness Review

- 5.1. The review, completed in early 2022, set out to provide an up-to-date picture of the:

- Current and likely future levels of homelessness across the Borough.
- Activities carried out & support available to prevent homelessness and those experiencing it.
- Level of resources made available locally to tackle homelessness.

A summary of key findings from the review is set out below.

- **Service demand and operational response.** The review showed that the demand for services remains high and is likely to remain so into the foreseeable future. During 2020/21, 1,370 households raised enquiries with the housing needs team, a small increase of 2% on the 1,339 enquiries received the year before. An assessment was completed for around sixty percent of these enquiries (817), of which around two-thirds (540 households) were found to be owed a prevention duty (because they were at risk of homelessness within 56 days when they approached the Council) or relief duty (because they were homeless at the time they approached the council).
- **Prevention duty and the Council's response.** The number of households whose prevention duty ended during the year is used to measure the level of activity under this duty. During 2020/21 this duty ended for 111 households, with the preventative activities undertaken by the housing needs team successfully securing accommodation for over sixty percent (62%) of those seeking help.

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<sup>7</sup> Government LA Housing Statistics - [Local authority housing statistics data returns for 2020 to 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-housing-statistics-data-returns-for-2020-to-2021) – Published 18/11/2021 and last updated 04/02/2022.

Around a fifth (19%) went on to become homeless. Taking positive action to prevent homelessness in this way reduces both the social cost of homelessness on households and the financial costs borne by the Council.

- **Relief duty and the Council's response.** The number of households whose relief duty ended during the year is used to measure the level of activity under this duty. During 2020/21 this duty ended for 335 households, with the activities undertaken by the housing needs team successfully securing accommodation and addressing homelessness for over a third (36%) of those seeking help. As is the case with preventative measures, relieving homelessness in this way reduces the social and financial costs of homelessness. Around 40% of households remained homeless as their relief duty ended (after 56 days) and progressed to be assessed under the main homelessness duty.
- **Main duty assessments.** The number of main duty assessments undertaken has fallen by 40% over the past three years, from 214 cases in 2018/19 to 134 in 2020/21. This trend reflects the impact of the HRA, which has seen many households assisted earlier in the process under the prevention and relief duties it introduced. The number of cases accepted under the main duty, because they were assessed as being not intentionally homeless and in priority need as also fallen, almost certainly because of the increasing numbers of single households coming through the system, again as a result of the HRA 2017 and, more recently, the pandemic. Single households are less likely to qualify as a priority than families, as having children is the key driver of priority need set out in the legislation. Most households re-housed under the main duty accepted an offer of a socially rented home (72%), with the remainder securing their own accommodation in the private rented sector.
- **Rough sleeping.** The number of rough sleepers in Eastbourne continues to be relatively high when compared with areas of a similar size, though in absolute terms the numbers remain fairly low. The annual rough sleeper count, which takes place in all local authorities each autumn, recorded 10 cases in 2021, a reduction from 14 in 2020, and 16 in 2019.<sup>8</sup> The Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) continues to provide ongoing support, carrying out proactive outreach work that identifies those sleeping rough and helps connect them with local services, but there remains a significant shortage of suitable move-on accommodation in the town. This has been exacerbated by the Government's 'Everyone In' & 'Protect & Vaccinate' Covid-19 plans, which provided much needed shelter for those at risk of rough sleeping, but have left high numbers of single, often vulnerable persons, in emergency accommodation. Addressing their support and housing needs is a priority.
- **Partnerships.** Working with statutory and voluntary partners has been integral to mounting an effective local response to homelessness, and a wide range of dedicated partners have joined efforts to help prevent homelessness and provide support to vulnerable households. The new 'duty to refer' pathway, introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act is working well, with 20% of all enquiries received having been referred by another agency via this route. The probation service, hospitals and prisons were the leading sources of referral.
- **Local trends and Covid-19.** Over the past year, analysis of how the housing needs service has been operating indicates that the pandemic has had a local impact that reflects national trends. As such, the associated policies that have sought to restrict evictions and support the most vulnerable, have increased the proportion of single households, and reduced the number of households with children being assisted by the housing needs team.
- **Impact of the HRA 2017.** There is evidence that the shift towards assisting more single households was underway before the pandemic, as a result of the new prevention and relief duties introduced by

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<sup>8</sup> Annual Rough sleeper snapshot (Oct 2021) – Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities – published February 2022 - [Rough sleeping snapshot in England: autumn 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2021)

the HRA. In 2020/21 single persons accounted for 73% of all those qualifying for assistance under the prevention or relief duties. Invariably, this means that the service is managing higher numbers of single and vulnerable people with mental health issues and other complex disadvantages.

- **Longer term trends.** Whilst in the short term there is likely to be some re-balancing of the profile of those accessing the service, as the impact of Covid-19 eases, services are likely to continue to face a high level of demand from a more marginalised and challenging customer base. In addressing these trends, the emphasis will need to be placed on putting in place high quality services, that seek to reduce demand through preventative activity and intervene effectively to support those households affected by homelessness.

## 6. Strategic Priorities

6.1. The strategic priorities are based around the following key themes:

### 1. PREVENTION

Quality housing needs & standards services - dedicated to effective advice, holistic and informed assessment.

Preventative casework – working alongside partners, to stop those seeking help from becoming homeless.

Targeted preventions for the most vulnerable groups – through the provision of agreed pathways into support.

Strategic activities - that seek to identify issues that drive homelessness across the Borough and apply remedies to reduce it.

### 2. INTERVENTION

Tackling rough sleeping – continue supporting the county-wide approach to reducing harm and addressing associated multiple, complex needs.

Partnership working - maximise the effectiveness of joint working and pathways for at risk groups.

Temporary housing – provide a good quality, safe, secure, value-for-money accommodation portfolio and reduce the use of emergency placements.

### 3. SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

Re-housing - establish a range of sustainable housing and move-on options for rough sleepers, vulnerable and homeless households.

Support - deliver effective support services to help households maintain accommodation once housed.

6.2. Each of these priorities is underpinned by a series of cross-cutting themes:

- Effective collaborations with statutory, agency and voluntary partners.
- High quality services, that treat applicants with respect and provide value for money.
- Skilled and well-trained staff.

6.3. Pursuing an integrated approach that works with partners to assess and prevent the local causes of homelessness and rough sleeping, can help deliver best practice, reduce the barriers that restrict people from accessing services, and equip residents with the skills they need to sustain their tenancy in the longer term.

## 7. Priority 1 – PREVENTION

7.1. The Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) introduced the *prevention duty* for local housing authorities, extending the period that they are required to work with those threatened with homelessness, from 28 to 56 days. Under this duty, the local authority must take reasonable steps to prevent eligible persons from becoming homeless, by helping them stay in their current home, or to find a new one. This duty informs the first priority of the strategy and will focus on addressing it by delivering an approach that balances strategic activities, preventative casework, and targeted support to the vulnerable and those living in poor quality accommodation. Underpinning this are the processes and resources needed to deliver a quality housing needs and standards service.

7.2. Taking each in turn:

- **Quality housing needs services - dedicated to effective advice, holistic and informed case assessment.** Plans will address this by putting in place processes that provide access to readily available housing advice, backed up by a well-equipped and knowledgeable team. The team will be empowered to intervene early to increase the likelihood of a successful outcome. Keeping the skills of the team up to date, to ensure that they deliver high quality, respectful, casework throughout the customer journey, and developing IT systems in order to automate and support processes, are the other essential elements that will help drive successful service delivery. Improving quality standards through the regular inspection of licenced HMOs and supporting residents who report concerns with Private Rented Sector standards, is another key aspect of the Council's work.
- **Preventative casework – working alongside partners to stop those seeking help from becoming homeless.** The approach here seeks to maximise the proportion of residents supported to stay in their existing home, or where this is not possible, facilitate a planned move to a new one. Maximising success here limits the trauma experienced by households undergoing homelessness and reduces the financial costs of funding emergency accommodation. Putting in place joint 'hub' arrangements with partners, providing financial incentives, and undertaking negotiations with private landlords, family, and friends, will all be key areas of focus. The private rented sector (PRS) will often be the only option for many looking for a home, so opening up access to lower cost, good quality, PRS housing options is also a priority. Promoting the recently launched landlord incentive

scheme, dedicating resources to work hand in hand with local agents, and examining innovative ways to boost the provision of rented accommodation, will all form part of the plans put in place.

- **Offering targeted preventions for the most vulnerable – through the provision of agreed pathways into support.** Providing accommodation alone is not a rounded solution to homelessness, especially for those with additional or complex needs, who will often require extra help to manage in their new home. Without this support vulnerable individuals and households can find themselves in repeat cycles of homelessness and at higher risk of rough sleeping. Fostering collaborations to develop and maintain clear and effective pathways to housing (for example when clients leave hospital, prison, care, or the RSI), delivering holistic services around those with the highest level of need, and increasing access to supported accommodation, are all tools that the strategy will help deliver.
- **Strategic activities - that seek to identify issues that drive homelessness across the Borough and apply remedies to reduce it.** Here activities will look to address this by focusing on modelling tenure, income, welfare benefit and demographic data to help identify which local households are most at risk of homelessness. Identified groups can then be engaged 'upstream', to reduce this risk materialising through co-ordinating locally available funding, staff, and project resources to offer support. Drawing these together to align wellbeing, employment, housing, and treatment plans, are the kinds of activities likely to offer the greatest chance of reducing future demand on services.

## 8. Priority 2 – INTERVENTION

- 8.1. The second strategic priority reflects the *relief duty*, also introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act, under which local authorities must intervene when an applicant has already lost their accommodation, so is homeless when they apply for help. Under this duty authorities must take reasonable steps to help the applicant secure a new home. Not every applicant can be prevented from losing their accommodation, so it is crucial that plans are in place to help maximise the range of realistic housing options available to households.
- 8.2. Targeted casework and putting in place a robust, well-resourced housing needs service are as important here as they are in helping prevent homelessness. Beyond that, the approach set out in the strategy is based around continuing to focus work through the Rough Sleeper Initiative and working with partners to address the needs of identified at risk groups. A further key goal is to minimise the use of temporary accommodation placements, but where these are necessary the strategy will focus on ensuring that these are clean, safe, and represent value for money for both the applicant and Council.
- 8.3. Taking each in turn:
  - **Tackling rough sleeping - continue supporting a county-wide approach to reduce harm and address associated multiple, complex needs.** The Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) is an established success. Local partners are now keen to build on this by working together to secure ongoing funding, replicate the RSI model to provide support to a wider group of local residents living with mental health / complex challenges, and develop a single county-wide approach for the most complex cases. Moving in this direction will help develop a more holistic approach to assessment, deliver models of support tailored to individual needs, and create flexible pathways into suitable accommodation options.
  - **Partnership working - maximise the effectiveness of joint working and pathways for at risk groups.** Addressing this goal will build on a range of projects and programmes already being delivered in partnership with other East Sussex local authorities. Recent examples of these include; a new service working with rough sleepers, those living with mental health challenges and other complex needs, to offer wellbeing support and employment advice; the deployment of independent domestic violence advocates who will help housing needs teams support victims; and

the launch of a new multi-agency assessment framework, which meets monthly to discuss high risk multiple cases and agree action plans. Additional pathways of support are in place for those leaving prisons, hospitals and care. Regular meetings with voluntary sector partners actively providing services to the homeless are already established and will continue to support the rollout of the new strategy.

- **Temporary housing – provide a good quality, safe, secure, value-for-money accommodation portfolio and reduce the use of emergency placements.** The overriding goal is to cut back on the use of emergency accommodation (EA), to help reduce the social cost of disruption to households and financial costs to the Council. However, there are times when the use of EA is unavoidable, so there is a need to ensure that both short-term emergency and medium-term temporary accommodation options, provide clean, safe homes that represent value for money. The strategy will put in place clear procurement goals and work with other partners (in the local *Temporary Accommodation Action Group*) to agree standards, set rents with other providers, and develop support plans for residents.

## 9. Priority 3 – SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

- 9.1. This third priority acknowledges the importance of having in place a range of options to meet housing demand across the Borough. It also recognises that having access to accommodation alone does not address the underlying causes of homelessness, and that housing provision often needs to be supported by services that can help new households sustain their tenancy. Aligning housing and support in this way can help prevent future homelessness and break the cycles that can result in households experiencing long-term instability.
- 9.2. Taking each in turn:
  - **Re-housing - establish a range of sustainable housing and move-on options for rough sleepers, vulnerable and homeless households.** The housing offered to households will include privately rented, council, social and supported housing, so the focus of the strategy here will be to help back the expanded provision of each. Carrying out robust housing needs assessments and taking steps to ensure that the needs identified are reflected in new developments is key. This will help ensure that new homes commissioned through developers and residential social landlords, using Government grants where available, meet local needs. Focussing on boosting the supply of supported move-on accommodation and opening up access to the private rented sector, particularly to those on low incomes, are other important areas of focus.
  - **Support – deliver effective services to help customers maintain accommodation once housed.** The strategy recognises that those moving into new homes have varying levels of need. These range from lower levels of support providing households with help settling in, through to the intensive support that may be needed to help households sustain tenancies over the longer term. Effectively assessing need and establishing the resources and skills required to meet it is a key goal of the new strategy. These needs will not always be fixed, so some degree of flexibility is required to allow support to be ‘stepped up’ or ‘stepped down’ as demand necessitates. A new pilot to address wellbeing, health and employability is already being delivered in partnership with the County’s public health team. This provides access to a wide range of interventions and the strategy seeks to expand this to develop a county-wide service capable of having a lasting impact on supporting the stability of many more households.

## 10. Governance & monitoring.

- 10.1. The senior leadership team within Homes First will oversee the delivery of this strategy. It will regularly monitor key milestones and the targets that need to be met, to maintain progress against the set priorities. It will also assign responsibility for completing tasks to named individuals and post holders within Homes First, or in other teams as appropriate. It will review progress against the plan every year and invite key stakeholders to take part in the process. The Council's lead member for housing will receive an annual report on progress against this strategy.

## 11. Delivery Plan

The themes and objectives set out above form the framework for this plan. Unlike the framework which is designed to remain fixed for the duration of the strategy, this delivery plan is intended to be reviewed and updated to reflect progress, changes to operating context and new funding and partnership opportunities.

Priority 1 – PREVENTION			
Objective	Action	Outcome(s)	Target Date
Quality housing needs & standards services - dedicated to effective advice, holistic and informed case assessment.	Train and develop a team of confident and experienced Housing Options Officers, to deliver high quality needs assessments and excellent customer service, with dignity & respect.	Develop & update skills matrix for all teams / staff.	In place & ongoing
		Organise delivery of homelessness law and case law update courses.	September 2022
		Organise delivery of 'trauma-informed' approach to assessment course.	September 2022
		Named staff champions with joint responsibility for leading specialist training / liaison in areas, such as domestic abuse and mental health awareness.	September 2022
		Establish enhanced monthly monitoring of complaints and ensure outcomes are discussed at 1-1s to reduce levels of complaints.	October 2022
	Develop IT systems to maximise efficiency, case management and reporting capabilities and align key customer processes.	Effective case management of homelessness applications & decisions in place.	September 2022
		Updated website content, with better quality information providing residents with opportunities to receive answers via self-service options.	September 2022

		Automated management reports detailing caseload, approaches, throughput, and demographics, to support the more effective monitoring of service.	December 2022
		Data reports that can be extracted and shared with partners to support the development of new initiatives and funding bids.	December 2022
		Key customer processes, including applications for homelessness, housing register, and change of circumstance forms, fully operational and online.	March 2023
		Automated processes in place that reduce the time spent on administrative tasks & improve customer outcomes.	March 2023
	Work closely with statutory and voluntary sector partners, ensuring customers can access advice & practical support which meets their needs and delivers realistic housing solutions.	Hold regular county-wide forum taking place via Homeless Link.	In place & ongoing
		Hold regular forum with voluntary homelessness service providers, advice, and statutory agencies.	In place & ongoing
		At least one partner agency invited to each monthly team meeting to discuss their service / project.	In place & ongoing
		Monitor referral arrangements in place to deliver preventative outcomes via commissioned partners.	In place & ongoing
	Align enforcement activities of Private Sector Standards Team to focus on prevention and relief outcomes and use of landlord incentives.	Higher numbers of prevention outcomes and reduced risks of homelessness.	November 2022

Preventative casework – working, alongside partners, to stop those seeking help from becoming homeless.	Work effectively with other colleagues in the Council such as housing benefit, private housing, neighbourhood services, licensing, and income teams, to help resolve issues that may lead to homelessness.	Improved standards in private sector accommodation resulting in fewer approaches due to disrepair.	April 2023
		Revised account management and debtor processes that limit arrears escalation and promote sustainable income recovery.	October 2022
	Work with neighbouring authorities and named public bodies to review and maintain effective ‘duty to refer’ pathways, to help drive the early identification of homelessness.	Increased volume of timely referrals from agencies and support services, improving prevention outcomes for applicants.	In place & ongoing
	Create a dedicated ‘hub’ of local partners, integrating the prevention work of Council teams, voluntary and statutory agencies, to focus on ‘upstream’ preventative activities’ and co-ordinate casework.	Hub established as the focus of preventative work and the lead in deploying early interventions targeted to those at risk of losing their home.	December 2022
		Increased volumes of planned moves to alternative PRS homes and other housing options through negotiation and the use of incentives.	March 2023
	Target financial support for tenants (DHP, deposits & rent in advance).	Reduced proportion of relief vs prevention outcomes managed through the housing needs team.	November 2023
	Develop an effective, value for money, landlord incentive scheme that encourages more private rented sector landlords to let homes to housing needs referrals.	Scheme published/advertised to private sector landlords.	September 2022
		Key point of contact for private sector landlords established and better working relationships with local landlords, local agents, and the National Residential Landlords Association.	September 2022

		Increased number of private sector properties available and reduced numbers of applicants in emergency / temporary accommodation (EA / TA).	September 2022
Offering targeted preventions for the most vulnerable – through the provision of agreed pathways into support.	Support education & awareness initiatives for young people & care leavers to highlight the reality of becoming homeless.	Continued funding of contributions to the East Sussex Schools Homeless Prevention Project (YMCA).	In place & ongoing
	Jointly manage and review key ‘duty to refer’ pathways for those leaving hospital and care teams, to improve interventions for the most vulnerable clients.	Reduced numbers of 18–25-year-old homeless applicants.	April 2023
		Better utilisation of existing pathways, such as the <i>Joint Protocol for young people 16/17 at risk of homelessness</i> and the <i>Care Leavers Housing</i> .	September 2022
	Develop pathways for prison leavers and those in the criminal justice system through the Local Leadership Integration Fund (LLIF) bid.	Jointly funded prison housing officer in post (LLIF bid).	March 2023
		Reduced number of prison leavers entering EA / TA.	March 2023
	Agree joint working pathways with Children’s Services for care leavers or families who may be intentionally homeless, to minimise the impact of homelessness on these households.	Reduced number of intentionally homeless families with children in EA / TA.	March 2023
Strategic activities - that seek to identify the issues that drive homelessness across the	Use reports / data modelling to identify households at risk of future homelessness.	Clearly identified lists of local residents to be targeted by interventions.	October 2022

Borough and apply remedies to reduce it.	Engage identified households and address specific issues by targeting practical, wellbeing and employment initiatives, to improve housing options.	Reduced demand on local homelessness / agency services.	March 2023
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Priority 2 – INTERVENTION

Objective	Action	Outcome(s)	Target date
Tackling rough sleeping - continue supporting the county-wide approach to reducing harm and addressing associated multiple, complex needs.	Work with neighbouring authorities and key delivery partners to establish local funding commitments and longevity for services once DLUHC funding ends	Agreed funding framework for rough sleeping services to sustain initiative for next 3 years.	August 2022
	Develop a county-wide support and accommodation approach for customers with the most complex support needs.	Multi Agency Risk Management (MARM) protocols embedded across the county.	August 2022
		An established multi-disciplinary team/ hub where multiple complex needs (MCN) cases across the county are managed in one place.	April 2023
		Reduced number of households with MCN in EA / TA.	April 2023
	Continue to use capital and revenue grants from DLUHC and Homes England, to provide dedicated move-on accommodation for former rough sleepers and work collaboratively with relevant partners to ensure the success of those placements.	Completed property acquisitions within the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP) - capital grant round 2021/22.	July 2022
		Support services within the RSAP revenue grant agreed and in place – revenue grant round 2021/22.	July 2022
		Fully utilise any 2022/23 capital and revenue allocation successfully bid for.	April 2023
		Increased number of units available specifically for use by former rough sleepers.	April 2023

		Reduced numbers of rough sleepers.	April 2023
	Engage with the voluntary sector and statutory agencies to target and deliver support where it is needed most and make best use of their well-established working relationship with this client group.	Established county-wide homelessness forum for relevant partners via Homeless Link	In place & ongoing
		Joint plan with voluntary groups for delivering Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEPE) responses and winter night shelters, in place.	In place & ongoing
		Support rough sleepers and the wider street community by addressing their vulnerability and wider impact on community safety issues.	In place & ongoing
Partnership working - maximise the effectiveness of joint working and pathways for at risk groups.	Strategic commitment to partnership working across various multi-agency panels and forums to find solutions in the most complex of individual cases.	Multi Agency Risk Management (MARM) protocols implemented across the county	In place & ongoing
		An established multi-disciplinary team/ hub where multiple complex needs (MCN) cases across the county are managed in one place.	April 2023
		Reduced number of MCN cases in EA / TA.	April 2023
	Strategic commitment to close working with East Sussex districts and boroughs to minimise duplication, pool resources and reduce costs.	Regular attendance at the East Sussex Housing Officers Group (ESHOG) and homelessness sub-group.	In place & ongoing
	Continue with consortium applications for grant funding wherever possible, to help maximise funding successes.	Successful joint bids with other East Sussex authorities for future funding opportunities.	In place & ongoing
	Contribute to county-wide efforts to improve services and options for victims of domestic	Enhanced housing options to support for victims of domestic abuse (DA).	November 2022

	abuse, including the ongoing <i>Respite Rooms</i> project and the deployment of <i>Independent Domestic Violence Advocates</i> .		
		Reduced numbers of DA victims going into EA / TA.	September 2022
Temporary housing – provide a good quality, safe, secure, value-for-money accommodation portfolio and reduce the use of emergency placements.	Review existing emergency and temporary accommodation provision to ensure value for money across the TA portfolio.	Reduced average cost per TA unit.	March 2023
		Quality portfolio of TA properties including disabled access and staffed accomm. to better meet a wide range of applicants housing needs, in place.	March 2023
		Continue to optimise the use of council stock as TA, over and above emergency short term placements.	Ongoing
	Review the allocations policy and make the best use of existing social housing stock.	Allocations policy updated, consulted, and approved.	March 2023
		Effective processes matching disabled applicants with adapted properties, in place.	December 2022
		Reduced void turnaround times.	In place & ongoing
	Explore opportunities to develop and maintain a County-wide TA policy and approach to procuring units, making placements, and managing the stock.	A shared policy and procedure covering on placements to TA agreed.	In place & ongoing
		Joint approach to procurement in place.	April 2023

Priority 3- SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

Objective	Action	Outcome(s)	Target date
Re-housing - establish a range of sustainable housing and move-on options for homeless households.	Explore developing a cohesive county-wide approach to PRS procurement and lettings of AST and leased properties.	Greater range of sustainable move-on options for homeless households delivered.	March 2023
	Review the impact of reduced student lettings in the PRS sector due to relocation of Brighton Univ. out of the town.	An understanding of the impact on the local PRS sector and enhanced opportunities to benefit local households in need.	April 2023
	Work with partners in ESCC to ensure the commissioning and best use of supported accommodation across the county.	New supported provision jointly commissioned by ESHOG via the agreed Supported Accommodation framework to reduce numbers of applicants in EA awaiting move-on to supported accommodation.	In place & ongoing
	Accelerate the delivery of new affordable & council general needs and supported housing, in partnership with the Council's development team, developers and registered providers.	Increased development pipeline of new affordable homes across the Borough.	In place & ongoing
	Ensure the Allocations policy balances the needs of homeless and housing register applicants & review existing applications	Revision of allocations policy complete & list up to date.	March 2023.
	Make best use of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to provide suitable adaptations across the public and private sector.	More residents continuing to live independently and DFG stats. reflected in homelessness prevention outcomes.	In place & ongoing

	Undertake regular assessments of housing need to inform delivery plans for new homes.	Comprehensive housing needs assessment completed in partnership with the Planning Policy Team.	March 2023
Support – deliver effective services to help customers maintain accommodation once housed.	Develop a <i>Wellbeing and Employability Service</i> , to help bridge the gap between health, homelessness and worklessness.	Team and support service in place.	April 2022
	Develop a standalone <i>Tenancy Readiness Platform</i> to provide training for homeless applicants in specific areas of independent living and tenancy sustainment	Tenancy readiness platform design and build complete and fully operational.	Oct 2022
		Tenancy readiness platform embedded into Housing Needs team procedures.	Feb 2023
		Tenancy readiness platform licensed out to other organisations.	March 2023