

# Mid Sussex District Council

## Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy



2020 - 2025



Ending  
homelessness  
together



# Contents Page

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>Foreward by Councillor Andrew MacNaughton, Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning</b> | <b>p2</b>  |
| <b>1. Introduction</b>  | <b>p4</b>  |
| <b>2. Key Findings of the Review</b>  | <b>p5</b>  |
| <b>Vision</b>   | <b>p6</b>  |
| <b>3. Strategic Framework</b>   | <b>p7</b>  |
| <b>4. Understanding Homelessness</b>  | <b>p13</b> |
| - Priority one - Preventing and Relieving Homelessness                                    | p14        |
| - Priority two - Minimise use of and improve Temporary Accommodation                      | p22        |
| - Priority three - Preventing Recurring Homelessness                                      | p27        |
| - Priority four - Tackling Rough Sleeping and Homelessness amongst Vulnerable groups      | p30        |
| - Priority five - Enable access to Suitable and Affordable Accomodation                   | p40        |
| <b>5. Delivering the strategy</b>   | <b>p44</b> |

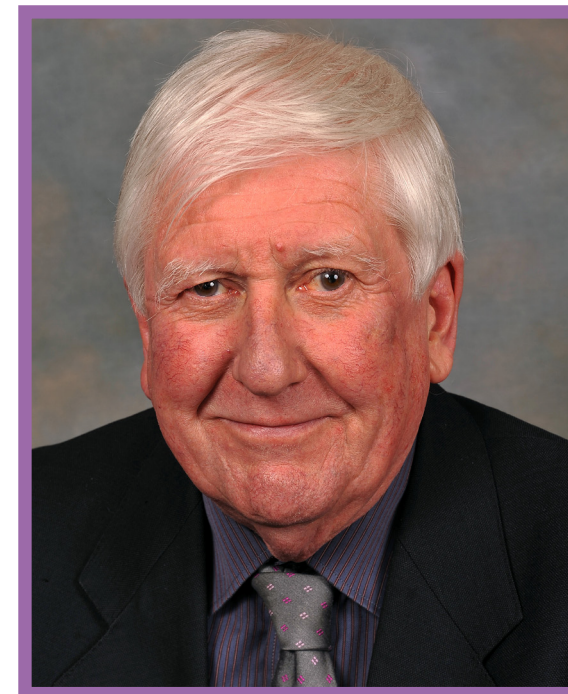
## Foreword by Councillor Andrew MacNaughton, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning

Mid Sussex District Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2020-2025 has been developed at a time of significant change in the legislation governing homelessness and against a background of acute housing shortages, particularly affordable housing shortages, across the county with affordability ratios a significant issue for Mid Sussex.

The strategy was developed before the COVID-19 pandemic which had the immediate impact of increasing the demands on the housing service and the pressures to provide and meet the costs of temporary accommodation including for rough sleepers. It is anticipated that the repercussions from Covid-19 will increase the risk of many more people losing their homes across all tenures in Mid Sussex during 2020/21 and 2021/22. Additionally, the personal pressures and stresses within families brought by the pandemic may lead to family breakdowns and more homelessness. The housing service will use all their efforts and resources to support and assist those at risk and prevent homelessness wherever they can.

Mid Sussex District Council has always made the provision of housing a priority as we understand the fundamental role secure housing makes in contributing to lifetime opportunities. Homelessness, in all its forms, can have a significant detrimental impact on many areas of life, including undermining educational achievement and acting as a barrier for those seeking and keeping employment. It also puts extra demand on health services.

Nationally homelessness is on the increase. There is growing evidence that shortages in the supply of affordable housing is putting additional pressure on households to find and sustain suitable affordable homes and this will result in increase in demand for our Housing Services in the coming years. We do not underestimate the challenge that the current housing market and the impact of welfare reform presents for some, but we believe we are well placed and determined to provide our residents with the best possible solutions to prevent homelessness wherever possible.



This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out the Council's proactive approach to the prevention of homelessness. Our objectives are to target resources earlier to those most at risk of homelessness; to minimise the use of temporary accommodation; work towards the end of rough sleeping; prevent recurring homelessness and enable access to suitable and affordable accommodation.

These objectives remain as appropriate and relevant in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as it remains the Council's aim that we need to prevent homelessness.

I look forward to working with our partners over the coming five years to realise this aim.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A MacNaughton', is displayed within a white rectangular box.

Councillor Andrew MacNaughton

# 1. Introduction

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out the Council's priorities for addressing homelessness in the District over the next five years and how it intends to endeavour to meet the Government's pledge to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and eliminate it altogether by 2027 in Mid Sussex.

We want fewer people in Mid Sussex to experience the trauma of homelessness and ensure that those who do can find a settled home as quickly as possible. Tackling homelessness involves strong partnerships with other local authorities, housing associations, positive engagement with the private rented sector and other agencies in both the statutory and voluntary sectors. There is much to build upon, and in particular we want to build on our successful proactive housing options approach, as strengthened by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which has helped to prevent homelessness and limit the use of temporary accommodation in the past.

The Council has a duty under the Homelessness Act 2002 to conduct a review of the nature and extent of homelessness in its District every five years and use this review to develop a strategy setting out how services will be delivered in the future to tackle homelessness and the available resources to prevent and relieve homelessness. In 2018 the Government published their national rough sleeping strategy which obligated local authorities to include a special focus on Rough Sleeping and this is Mid Sussex's first Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

In developing the new Strategy, a comprehensive review of homelessness in the district was undertaken. Identifying and understanding the impact of the challenges in Mid Sussex will be crucial to the delivery of this revised strategy and the future delivery of services. In conducting the review and formulating the strategy, the Council has taken into account the new duties introduced through the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. This Strategy sits alongside Mid Sussex District Council's District Plan, the Tenancy Strategy and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The Council's latest review to this Strategy and the key issues identified in this review as well as the responses to the consultation with residents, service users, partner and stake holders have been used to inform and develop the strategic objectives. The consultation was undertaken via a consultation event and an online survey available to the public on our website and over 244 individuals and partner organisations were sent the survey direct and invited to contribute their views and perceptions of homelessness within the district.

# Key Findings of the Review



**PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR** - Landlords and letting agencies remain reluctant to let to households in receipt of benefits. Universal credit is compounding this issue due to concerns about tenant arrears. Upfront costs can equate to over £2,500 and rents are on average £1,255pcm, 27% higher than the Local Housing Allowance. This leaves the sector largely inaccessible to households on low incomes or in receipt of benefits.

**HOUSING MARKET** - In Mid Sussex the average asking price for a property increased by approximately 49% in the last 10 years to approximately £370k in September 2018. On average residents can expect to pay around 11 times their annual household earnings to purchase an average priced property in Mid Sussex, making home ownership largely unattainable to households on low incomes.

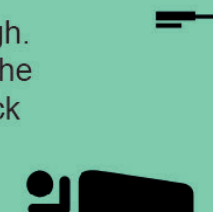


**SUPPLY OF HOUSING** - The supply of housing is unable to meet the demand. Approximately 386 social homes become available each year, but there are over 1424 households on the housing register (this includes existing social tenants seeking to transfer to an alternative property). From 2014/15 to 2018/19 3914 new homes were built in the district of which 709 were affordable housing, approximately 140 per annum.



**HOMELESSNESS** - Over 930 households approach the Council annually for advice and assistance regarding housing and homelessness. The most common reason for people becoming homeless in 2018/19 was parents/relatives/friends being unable to accommodate them (31%), followed by loss of privately rented accommodation (28%). These remain the predominant causes of homelessness in Mid Sussex.

**ROUGH SLEEPING** - There is a local and national trend in the rising number of people sleeping rough. This is not believed to be attributable to one specific issue, but a variety of complex factors, such as the impact of welfare reforms, rising housing costs, mental health issues, substance addictions, and a lack of affordable and supported housing. In the last 5 years (2014 – 2018) the numbers reported in Mid Sussex for the annual winter count have fluctuated between 7 and 11, the number for 2018 was 10. 2019 was 8.



**FUTURE FUNDING OF HOUSING RELATED SUPPORT SERVICES** - Pressure on budgets at West Sussex County Council is placing supported accommodation and services for vulnerable people at risk, requiring new models of service delivery or alternative funding streams to continue to provide services for this group.

**As a result of the Homelessness Review, the Council has indentified the following 5 priorities for addressing homelessness within Mid Sussex:**

- Preventing and relieving homelessness
- Minimise the use of and improve temporary accommodation
- Prevent recurring homelessness
- Tackling rough sleeping and homelessness amongst vulnerable groups
- Enable access to suitable and affordable accommodation

The Action Plan explains in more detail how the Council plans to address these priorities.

## Vision

Mid Sussex District Council's main purpose is to be an effective Council delivering value for money services and helping to create a strong economy, environment and community.

The Council remains committed to preventing and reducing homelessness, tackling the main causes of homelessness and supporting those in need. The overall aim for this Strategy is to deliver an accessible service to prevent homelessness and assist homeless households in finding long term affordable and sustainable housing.

The following sections explain in more detail the specific commitments that will deliver our vision for Mid Sussex. Those sections include a detailed view of the outcomes we aim to deliver along with the key actions and measures of success. They also include details about the key partners we will be working with.

### 3. Strategic Framework

The work of local authorities is carried out against an evolving back drop of legislation, guidance, and wider market influences. It is led nationally by central Government, but applied locally through policies and procedures that allow authorities to tailor their services to meet the needs of their residents.

#### National Context

The Government's White Paper on housing, 'Fixing our broken housing market', in March 2018 acknowledged the scale of the problem in providing a range of housing that meets a cross-section of need. Without a cure to the imbalance in the market, the result has been a national increase in all forms of housing need, exhibiting itself in the most acute forms of housing need – homelessness and rough sleeping. On 30 June 2018 the number of households in temporary accommodation was 82,310, up 5 per cent from 78,540 on 30 June 2017, and up 71 per cent on the low of 48,010 on 31 December 2010. According to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), from January to March 2019, 32,740 households were considered homeless, a rise of 11.2% from 29,430 in the quarter before. 84,740 households with 126,020 children were in temporary accommodation in March 2019.

Affordability and the issue of households on low incomes being able to resolve their housing need is particularly challenging in London and the South East. The ratio that demonstrates the cost of housing against earnings has increased in a negative way, to the point now that for residents in Mid Sussex the cost of housing within the open market is 11 times the earning capability.

The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) has not kept pace with the market resulting in an increasingly unaffordable private rented market for households on low incomes who are dependent either wholly or in part for assistance with their housing costs. A direct correlation can be made between the increasing disparity between the LHA and the increase in the number of homelessness applications resulting from a loss of accommodation within that sector.

It has been acknowledged that there have been unintended consequences from the various measures introduced through welfare reform. In February 2019, the Minister for the Department of Works and Pensions conceded challenges with the initial rollout of universal credit and that the difficulty in accessing money was "one of the causes" of the rise of food-banks.



### Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

Homeless households are provided with assistance under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 ('the HRA'), which came into force on 3rd April 2018. The HRA renewed the focus on preventing and relieving homelessness, placing duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages, and to provide homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who were protected under existing legislation.

On 1st October 2018 the 'duty to refer' came into force, giving certain public bodies a legal duty to refer households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness to a local authority for advice and assistance. Whilst registered providers do not have a duty to refer, a number have signed up to the 'Commitment to Refer', a voluntary commitment to making referrals where no statutory duty to do so exists. The Council encourages registered providers with housing stock in the district to adopt such practices as it provides earlier opportunities to intervene and potentially prevent homelessness.

### Rough Sleeper Strategy

The Government published a Rough Sleeper Strategy in August 2018 that lays out their commitment to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end it by 2027. Work to deliver these aims is built around three core pillars: Prevention (understanding the issues that lead to rough sleeping and providing timely support for those at risk), Intervention (helping those already sleeping rough with swift support tailored to their individual circumstances) and Recovery (supporting people in finding a new home and rebuilding their lives). The strategy acknowledges that ending rough sleeping will require central and local government, as well as business, communities, faith and voluntary groups and the general public to work together to tackle the problem.

### Welfare Reform

Welfare reforms introduced since the previous Strategy present ongoing challenges to households in receipt of benefits and to the organisations and individuals that house and support them.

Most notably, since the introduction of Universal Credit, local authorities and social housing providers have reported its impact on claimants' ability to meet their household costs and there has been a reported increase in rent arrears as a result. On 15 July 2019 the National Federation of ALMOs published a survey into the impact of Universal Credit. The survey of 39 respondents managing over half a million social and affordable properties found that:

- ➔ 12% of households are on Universal Credit, increasing from 4% last year.
- ➔ 30% of all households have arrears, owing an average of 4 weeks rent (£320)
- ➔ 21% of households on HB have arrears, owing on average 3 weeks rent (£221)
- ➔ 67% of households on Universal Credit have arrears, owing 7 weeks rent (£564)

**BENEFIT CAP** – Benefits have been capped to limit the amount households can receive unless they are working for the required hours:

- £384.62 (£20,000 a year for 1 or 2 parent families)
- £257.69 per week (£13,400 a year for single people)

**UNIVERSAL CREDIT** – Universal Credit (UC) sees all working age benefits (excluding Personal Independence Payment and Carer's Allowance) rolled into one single monthly payment.

This payment includes the housing element and is paid direct to the tenant.

**SINGLE ROOM RATE** – Single people under the age of 35 are only able to claim the single room Local Housing Allowance Rate – the rate of a room in a shared house.

This makes it very difficult for those under 35 to secure a home in the private rented sector that they can afford.

**LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE** – In 2016 Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates were frozen for four years until 2020.

**SPARE ROOM SUBSIDY** – Children of different sexes are expected to share a bedroom until aged 10 and of the same sex until aged 16.

Housing benefit is calculated on this basis and where families are 'under-occupying', tenants are required to meet any shortfall in rent.

**PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE PAYMENT** – Personal Independence Payment (PIP) has replaced Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for people aged 16 to 64 making new claims.

This is based on how a person's condition affects them, not the condition they have.

### Leaving the European Union

In the national referendum on 23 June 2016 the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. The ramifications for housing-related areas (such as the housing market, the labour market, forecasted and actual population growth, the economy, financing programmes and procurement rules) are as yet unknown.

### Local Context

The Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy sits within a framework of documents that guide the Council's approach to housing and homelessness (as shown below) underpinned by the Council's corporate priority and commitment to drive down homelessness in the District.



West Sussex Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019 – 2024



District Plan 2014-2031



Strategic Housing Market Assessment



Tenancy Strategy



Allocations Scheme



Registered Providers Tenancy Policies

### Local Plan

The Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031, (as adopted in March 2018) sets the way forward for planning the future for Mid Sussex. The plan identified a total housing need of 16,390 homes for the period 2014-2031. The District Plan examination concluded that Mid Sussex has a housing need of 876 dwellings per annum until 2023/24.

## Tenancy Strategy

A requirement of the Localism Act 2011 is that local authorities have a Tenancy Strategy in place which sets out their expectations of social housing providers operating within their district to ensure that housing is provided to meet local housing need. Social housing providers are to have regard to this Tenancy Strategy when adopting or reviewing their own tenancy policies and operating procedures. The Tenancy Strategy sets out the Council's expectations of registered providers operating in the District in relation to:



To meet housing need, including the needs of those who are homeless, those to whom we must give reasonable preference owing to the inadequacy of their housing, and those who are older or vulnerable for some other reason.



To create balanced and sustainable communities. This means giving people tenancies that help them put down roots. It also means achieving mixed-income communities. A mix of incomes can be achieved by including affordable housing within open market sites, and by including social and/or affordable rent alongside intermediate tenures, including shared ownership. Where appropriate, a mix of working and non-working households can be achieved through the use of local lettings policies.



To ensure that low income households can continue to be housed. Providers should consider and take into account the impact of different rent levels on different household types, and ensure that all household types in need of affordable housing can be catered for, including larger families requiring three or four bedroom accommodation. Providers need to take this into account in setting their rent policies for new build housing, and also in their approach to converting existing stock from target to affordable rents. Affordable housing is very over-subscribed in the District, and disposals of social or affordable rented homes should be the exception.



To make best use of stock and facilitate movement within the sector. This would include enabling under occupiers, including existing social tenants, to downsize by considering the terms of any alternative tenancy that would encourage them to move, as well as encouraging those in substantially adapted properties to move if they no longer need those adaptations.



To help people make informed choices through effective communication and information regarding rents and fixed term tenancies, especially for existing social housing tenants.



To prevent homelessness arising as a result of the ending of fixed term tenancies.

The Council also encourages registered providers with housing stock in the District to sign up to the “Commitment to Refer”, a voluntary commitment to making referrals where no statutory duty to do so exists. This encouragement will be included in the Council’s Tenancy Strategy when it is next reviewed. This is also reinforced in the Council’s Joint Protocol on Tenancy Sustainment and Homelessness Prevention. The Council encourages such practices as it provides earlier opportunities to intervene and potentially prevent homelessness.

### **Allocation Scheme**

Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 requires local authorities to have a published Allocation Scheme for defining the procedure to be followed in the allocation of social housing. Mid Sussex District Council use a banding scheme to assess the relative priority of applicants on the housing register, and ensures that priority is given to those with a reasonable preference. Households who are homeless within the meaning of Part 7 of the Act have a reasonable preference, along with others as specified by the Scheme.

Social housing is a limited resource and the Allocation Scheme has to balance the needs of housing homeless households to whom a duty is owed (and whom might be living in temporary accommodation), with those who have had their priority assessed through an application to join the housing register and who are in housing need for one or more other reasons.

### **Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019 – 2024**

The West Sussex Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) encompasses a range of work, including detailed needs assessments and a range of briefings and ad hoc analyses. The JSNA 2018 details the evidence base for the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019 – 2024.

The West Sussex Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019 - 2024 is a tool to enable the Health and Wellbeing Board to set out the plan for action by the Council County, Clinical Commissioning Group, NHS providers, district and borough councils, voluntary sector and other partners to inform their planning, commissioning and provision of services.

To achieve the vision and reduce health inequalities as set out in the strategy, work that sets the direction of travel for health and wellbeing across the county is divided into three themes;

- 1) Starting well (covering pregnancy to young adulthood)

- 2) Living and working well (covering adulthood)
- 3) Aging well (covering later life to end of life)

One of the four goals within the 'Living and Working Well' theme is that "People have access to good quality homes providing a secure place for families to thrive and promote good health, wellbeing and independent living". This is elaborated on as:

"Adequate housing, where people can live in security, peace and dignity, is a basic human right. The quality of housing plays a critical role in creating and maintaining good health, as well as helping individuals to recover from illness and remain independent. We will champion prevention and support targeted action towards those at risk of homelessness, including those in contact with mental health services."

One of the key initiatives through which it is envisioned this goal will be achieved is "Preventing homelessness – working with frontline staff to identify risk factors and intervene early". West Sussex County Council is the lead authority for the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2024.

## 4 UNDERSTANDING HOMELESSNESS

We know that at different points in people's lives there are specific triggers and risk factors that affect the likelihood of a person experiencing homelessness. However, homelessness and rough sleeping are not inevitable consequences of these drivers, as many people who experience them do not become homeless.

Understanding the events that may lead to or contribute towards homelessness assists the Council in highlighting who is most at risk of becoming homeless and therefore which organisations and services the Council need to work with to maximise opportunities for early intervention and the prevention of homelessness.






Housing is often part of a wider problem and symptomatic of deeper issues. Frequently these underlying causes are not being adequately addressed by the services the person has come into contact with. Often this is because the person does not meet relevant service thresholds where the right expertise may otherwise be available, or because we can sometimes – even when trying to operate collectively - work in isolation. Sometimes the person we need to help is viewed by agencies, including ourselves, through the lens of our own constraints. This strategy looks to challenge that approach and rethink how we work with people and support agencies to improve outcomes for our service users.

## PRIORITY ONE: PREVENTING AND RELIEVING HOMELESSNESS

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced duties to ensure that local authorities focus on working with service users to try to prevent and/or relieve their homelessness. This Strategy reflects this approach.

### Challenges

The Homelessness Review and consultation responses identified the following challenges to preventing and relieving homelessness in Mid Sussex:

-  **EXPECTATIONS** - Expectations of accessing social housing are not realistic relative to the actual supply and demand of social housing locally.
-  **THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR** - The costs and challenges associated with accessing the private rented sector limit our ability to prevent/relieve homelessness this way. The end of assured shorthold tenancies (within private rented accommodation) is also one of the two most common causes of homelessness in Mid Sussex.
-  **FAMILY EVICTION** - Eviction from the parental home is the other predominant cause of homelessness in Mid Sussex. Young people remaining in or returning to the parental home is often symptomatic of wider issues, such as an inability to afford accommodation locally. Involvement at the point of crisis can mean missed opportunities for early intervention and the prevention of homelessness.
-  **WELFARE REFORMS** - Single people under the age of 35 who are in receipt of benefits can only claim the shared accommodation rate of the Local Housing Allowance. This limits our options for preventing or relieving their homelessness. Those affected by the benefit cap are also adversely affected and in some cases are not even able to afford social housing social rents.
-  **HIDDEN HOMELESSNESS** - Identifying and tackling hidden homelessness (where households do not have a place to call home but are not reflected in official statistics as homeless, such as those who are sofa surfing with friends for example) remains a challenge, as the scale of the situation remains largely undetermined.



## Action Taken

**1. ALLOCATION SCHEME** – The demand for social housing outweighs the supply. Through its published Allocations Scheme, the Council balances the competing demands of households to whom a housing duty is owed under homelessness legislation with those in housing need on the housing register (including those who under-occupy or are overcrowded in their existing accommodation).

Mid Sussex District Council reviews its Allocations Scheme as required by legislation. The Scheme seeks to balance conflicting priorities for housing. In doing this it provides vulnerable households to whom a Relief Duty is owed reasonable preference and on depending on the circumstances of the household, this may mean they are able to access social housing avoiding the need to be placed into temporary accommodation.

**2. PREVENTING AND RELIEVING HOMELESSNESS** – This Council's focus is on the prevention and relief of homelessness. Over the past five years we have worked with a variety of different services and agencies to achieve positive outcomes for households whilst minimising the impact on multiple services and the wider public purse. Projects have included:



Working with Revenues and Benefits department to:

Maximise the use of qualifying Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to prevent and relieve homelessness where there are financial difficulties that can be assisted with time limited payments through the Housing Benefit system to sustain current or access new accommodation

Secure funding from the Department of Work and Pensions for an Employment Support Co-Ordinator post to reduce the risk of homelessness by maximising a person's income



Working with Citizen's Advice to provide money advice and homelessness prevention service



Working with Turning Tides to provide support to those who are or are at risk of rough sleeping



Development of the Joint Protocol on Tenancy Sustainment and Homelessness Prevention and improving referral processes for those at risk of eviction with RSLs



Having Joint Protocols for agencies in West Sussex to improve outcomes for 16/17 year olds and Care Leavers



Working with the Accommodation Team and Adult Services within WSCC to prevent homelessness in partnership to achieve better outcomes for families and vulnerable adults



Working with Probation Services to help offenders to access accommodation and reduce re-offending



Working with the Youth Homelessness Prevention Team to secure positive outcomes for young people in West Sussex



Referring to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to protect the welfare of children and adults who we come into contact with



Working with Health Visitors and other health professionals to recognise housing difficulties when visiting people at home



Working with the Integrated Prevention and Earliest Help (IPEH) Team to ensure families are supported when experiencing difficulties



Intentionally Homeless Families Project with West Sussex County Council (WSCC)



**3. RENT IN ADVANCE AND DEPOSIT GUARANTEE SCHEME** – For those who are eligible, the Council provides Rent in Advance and/or a Deposit Bond to prevent and relieve homelessness by assisting households into the private rented sector. In order to access the service the household must have a connection to Mid Sussex and not have a housing related debt with the Council. **Over the last five years, we have assisted over 470 households into the private rented sector as at the end of March 2019.**

**4. FINANCING THE HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION FUND** – through the Governments Flexible Homelessness Support Grant the Council has set up a fund to prevent and relieve homelessness.

**5. SUPPORT** – Where the Council has provided assistance to help households secure private rented housing it will provide tenancy sustainment support to prevent homelessness from their privately rented home. The Council also provides support to prevent households from losing Temporary Accommodation. Mid Sussex District Council also funds a Homeless Prevention and Money Advice Service through Citizens Advice. The aim of this is to prevent homelessness where possible through the timely delivery of specialist debt and money advice for households at risk of losing their homes. **Since the service has been in operation from November 2018 to October 2019, over 140 households have been referred and assisted through this service.** This service has been extended from 3 days a week to 5 days from November 2019.

**6. SERVICE DELIVERY** - Since the Homelessness Reduction Act was introduced in April 2018, the way in which statutory homelessness services are delivered has changed. The Council has established 6 additional posts, including 2 Homelessness Prevention Officers, these officers work with households who are threatened with homelessness as soon as a risk is identified.

Over the last **5** years,  
we have assisted over  
**470** households into  
the private rented sector  
as at the end of March 2019.



A new IT system enables the Council to implement and deliver the Homelessness Reduction Act and provide the quarterly statistical returns required by central government.

The Council have been developing digital solutions to facilitate easy and convenient contact for customers at an early stage.

**7. DUTY TO REFER** – In partnership with other Councils in West Sussex we have developed a generic countywide referral form and dedicated email address for all housing authorities to ensure all relevant agencies are able to make referrals quickly and easily for individuals and households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. **Between 1st October 2018 and 31st July 2019, the Council received 62 referrals.**

**8. COMMITMENT TO REFER** - Many Housing Associations, who do not have a duty to refer have committed to referring households who are at risk of homelessness to intervene earlier, and have signed up to the Commitment to Refer.

**9. GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION** – Mid Sussex District Council have raised and highlighted the affordability issues caused by the difference between the LHA rates and actual rental charges in Mid Sussex with central government at every opportunity.

## Action Plan to Meet Priority One: Preventing and relieving homelessness

| Action |   | Desired Outcomes  | Lead  | Partners  | Target Timescale  |
|--------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.1    | Provide timely and accurate information, advice and assistance to enable people to resolve their housing difficulties without becoming homeless | Maximise the opportunities to prevent households at risk from becoming homeless.  | Housing Needs Team Manager, (MSDC)                |   | 2020 - 2025   |
| 1.2    | Maximise the use of Discretionary Housing Payment to prevent and relieve homelessness   | Best use is made of DHP to prevent those affected by welfare reform and benefit issues from becoming homeless.<br>Improved outcomes for households at risk of homelessness due to welfare reform and benefit issues | Senior Housing Needs Officer (MSDC),              | Employment Co-Ordinator (MSDC), Housing Benefit Service (MSDC), JCP | 2020 - 2025   |
| 1.3    | Review the Housing Allocation Scheme to make sure it continues to make best use of available social housing stock                               | A Housing Allocation Scheme that continues to support homelessness prevention   | Housing Needs Team Manager (MSDC)                 | RSL partners and Homemove Team                                      | Review in response to relevant legislative and case law changes |
| 1.4    | Ensure that Flexible Homelessness Support Grant is used effectively to help prevent and relieve homelessness.                                   | Increase in the number of successful prevention and relief cases.   | Business Unit Leader for Housing Services (MSDC)  |   | Review annually   |
| 1.5    | Assess demand and evolve services to ensure it is structured to best meet the needs of our customers  | Structure the service to ensure that it continues to effectively meet demand<br>Increase in the number of successful homeless preventions.  | Business Unit Leader for Housing Services (MSDC), |   | Review annually   |

|     |   |  |                                    |                                     |  |
|-----|---|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1.6 | Ensure the new CBL and HOPE software system meets the IT needs of the Homelessness Reduction Act and the Housing Register.  | Ensure system provides a robust efficient system to manage HCLIC data requirements, provides effective and reliable functionality to deliver our Homelessness Reduction Act duties and manage the Housing Register and lettings of social housing in Mid Sussex. | Housing Needs Team Manager (MSDC)  | Homemove Manager                    | 2020 - 2025                                      |
| 1.7 | Highlight the issues of affordability caused by the difference between the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates and actual rental charges in Mid Sussex with central government at every opportunity   | Change to central government policy to bring LHA rates and private sector rents closer and more affordable   | All relevant MSDC staff            | All relevant agencies in Mid Sussex | In response to relevant government consultations |
| 1.8 | Explore revising the Council's Private Rented Sector Tenancy Start up Scheme (Rent in Advance and Deposit Bond) and Landlord Offer  | Increase in the number of private rented properties available to households being assisted by the Council thereby maximising opportunities to prevent and relieve homelessness<br>Fewer private sector evictions.  | Housing Needs Team Manager (MSDC)  | Private landlords<br>Letting Agents | August 2020 and thereafter kept under review     |
| 1.9 | Continue to work with Registered Social Landlords to improve joint working processes to reduce evictions. This includes working closely with RSL's to encourage them to sign-up to the Homelessness Prevention and Tenancy Sustainment Protocol and the Commitment to Refer | Increase in number of RSLs who have signed up to the Protocol. Protocol in place and implemented. Reduction in the number of avoidable rent arrears and other evictions.   | Housing Needs Team Manager (MSDC), | RSLs                                | October 2020 and thereafter kept under review    |

|      |  |  |                                     |   |   |
|------|--|--|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| 1.10 | Improve opportunities to identify those at risk of homelessness earlier by working in partnership with agencies.                               | <p>Timely and accurate information advice and assistance is provided to prevent homelessness.</p> <p>Services are more aware of homelessness, and able to identify earlier, households who might be at risk and what they can do to work together to prevent it.</p> | Housing Needs Team Manager, (MSDC)  | MSDC Employment Co-ordinator<br>CAB<br>JCP<br>RSLs<br>MSDC Family Intervention Officer,<br>WSCC (children & adult services)<br>All willing statutory and voluntary agencies | Review annually and in response to relevant changes |
| 1.11 | Work jointly with Housing Benefit service to ensure funding for Employment Co-Ordinator continues.   | <p>Funding for the Employment Co-ordinator post continues where available.</p> <p>Those affected by welfare benefit issues are provided with support and assistance to maximise their income and get them into employment.</p>                                       |                                     |   |   |
| 1.12 | Review the referrals received through the Duty to Refer to establish where further work needs to be undertaken in terms of links and training. | Increase in appropriate referrals are received and ensure that agencies are aware of their statutory responsibilities and provide training/information where required.   | Senior Housing Needs Officer (MSDC) | West Sussex district and borough Councils, relevant public bodies subject to the duty to refer  | Start project April 2020                            |

|      |   |   |                                   |                                  |                 |
|------|---|---|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1.13 | Consider establishing a regular multi-agency homelessness forum to design and deliver homelessness prevention measures  | Increase in effective joint working to prevent homelessness.  | Housing Needs Team Manager (MSDC) | Statutory and Voluntary agencies | April 2021      |
| 1.14 | Provide low income households with debt and budget management advice through the commissioned Citizens Advice Money Advice and Homelessness Prevention Service. | Fewer rent arrears amongst private and social housing sector tenants. Fewer evictions for rent arrears. | Housing Needs Team Manager (MSDC) | Citizens Advice                  | Review annually |

## PRIORITY TWO: MINIMISE THE USE OF & IMPROVE TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

The Council recognises that being in temporary accommodation can be a very stressful and negative experience. For those households that need temporary accommodation, the Strategy prioritises the provision of more good quality temporary accommodation within the district and to enable those households to move through temporary accommodation into a settled home as soon as possible.

### Challenges

The Homelessness Review and response from the consultation process identified the following challenges to minimising the use of and to improving temporary accommodation in Mid Sussex:

**Lack of temporary accommodation within the district** – The Council has access to 19 units of temporary accommodation within the District provided by Clarion Housing and up to 14 units with other supported housing providers. We also have 13 units provide by this Council but this is not sufficient to meet the need.

**Lack of affordable housing in both the private and social rented sector** – The costs and challenges associated with accessing the private rented sector limit our ability to move households out of temporary accommodation into a home in this sector. There is also insufficient social housing to meet the demand and this limits our ability to move households into a home with a Registered Social Landlord.

**Personal issues preventing move on from temporary accommodation** – In addition to the issues above, there are some households that find it more difficult to move from temporary accommodation than others. There are a variety of reasons which include a the benefit cap, history of rent arrears, anti-social behaviour, offending, complex health issues and other risk issues that make both social and private landlords reluctant to accept them as tenants.



## Action Taken

**ALLOCATION SCHEME ALLOCATION SCHEME** – Mid Sussex District Council amended the Housing Allocation Scheme to award additional priority to those households to whom the Council owes an accommodation duty under the homelessness legislation. It also allows such households to place unlimited bids within each bidding cycle to maximise their chances of making a successful bid (however they are required to accept the first suitable offer). The Scheme has also been amended to allow direct allocations with the agreement of the Council and the RSL to be made in exceptional circumstances.

**ACQUIRING and LEASING COUNCIL MANAGED TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION** - During 2018/19, the Council set aside £4m, to acquire up to 20 units of temporary accommodation within the District, either through acquisition or lease. As at the end of August, the Council has acquired 13 properties, including one which is to be adapted for wheelchair users. In addition we are working to lease Private Sector properties. This will increase the provision of good quality temporary accommodation within the District. **In 2018/19 a duty to house 13 households whose priority need was due to physical disabilities was accepted compared to just 1 in 2014/15.**

**CREATION OF ADDITIONAL POSTS** - The Council has invested in the Housing Needs service to meet the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act, the demands of increased homelessness and to best achieve Homelessness Prevention.

Temporary Accommodation Support and Homelessness Prevention Officer post has been created support households in temporary accommodation. The primary objective of this role is to ensure that households move out of temporary accommodation into more settled accommodation as soon as possible. This includes identifying any support needs and ensuring that appropriate support is put in place to address issues that may result in them being unable to move out of temporary accommodation expediently.

Two Homelessness Prevention Officer roles have been created to concentrate on preventing homelessness at the earliest opportunity. They work proactively with any households threatened with losing their accommodation and ensuring practical interventions are put in place wherever possible.

A Temporary Accommodation Management Officer has been recruited to manage Council owned temporary accommodation and provide intensive housing management support to assist the move into more settled accommodation as soon as possible.

Private Rented Sector Tenancy Negotiator and Sustainment Officer post has been created to increase access to the private rented sector to assist households in temporary accommodation into a suitable home in the private rented sector.



## Action Plan to Meet Priority Two: Minimise the use of and improve temporary accommodation.

| Action |  | Desired Outcomes  | Lead  | Partners  | Target Timescale |
|--------|--|---|---|---|------------------|
| 2.1    | Minimise the use of expensive nightly paid accommodation where better alternatives exist.  | Use of expensive private guest house type of accommodation kept to a minimum.<br>Temporary accommodation costs to the Council are contained.  | Housing Needs Team Manager (MSDC)   | TA providers  | 2020 - 2025      |
| 2.2    | Expand the provision of temporary accommodation by acquiring Private Sector Leasing housing in the district.   | Use of expensive guest house type accommodation kept to a minimum.<br>Placements of households in temporary accommodation outside of the District is reduced.<br>Provision of better quality temporary accommodation. | Business Unit Leader, Housing Services (MSDC)<br>Housing Enabling Team Manager (MSDC) | Legal Services, Corporate Estates,  | April 2021       |
| 2.3    | Evaluate options to increase temporary accommodation in the district in line with known needs particularly for those with mental health and complex needs. | Temporary accommodation that is close to people's health care and support that can best enable resettlement and recovery  | Business Unit Leader for Housing Services and Housing Needs team Manager (MSDC)       | Mental Health Services, WSCC Adult Services and Housing Support providers | April 2021       |
| 2.4    | Ensure that the range of temporary accommodation available to the Council remains flexible and diverse to meet changing needs.                             | Sufficient supply of suitable temporary accommodation available to meet the need e.g. wheelchair accessible   | Housing Needs Team Manager (MSDC)   | TA Providers  | Review annually  |

|            |  |   |                                   |                                      |                 |
|------------|--|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>2.5</b> | Ensure that those households placed in temporary accommodation are receiving appropriate support and assistance with payment of charges and their efforts to secure longer term housing, so as to minimise the time they spend in such accommodation | Issues preventing households from moving through temporary accommodation are identified and measures put in place to address them | Housing Needs Team Manager (MSDC) | Private Landlords and Letting Agents | Review annually |
| <b>2.6</b> | Make greater use of assured shorthold tenancies in the private rented sector to discharge homelessness duty  | Households in temporary accommodation are supported to access private rented accommodation.<br>Reduced costs to the Council.      | Housing Needs Team Manager (MSDC) | Private Landlords and Letting Agents | Review annually |
| <b>2.7</b> | Improve processes with temporary accommodation providers to ensure unnecessary delays are avoided  | Placement of households in temporary accommodation is kept to a minimum.<br>Reduce costs to the Council.                          | Housing Needs Team Manager (MSDC) | Clarion Housing                      | Review annually |

## PRIORITY THREE: PREVENTING RECURRING HOMELESSNESS

For some people, homelessness can be a revolving door of seeking assistance, accessing services, only to later become homeless again. The reasons for this vary from person to person but are often linked or attributable to the following:

Lack of the skills needed to maintain a tenancy, such as budgeting, managing debts, understanding utilities, savings and financial products.

Lack of support in place to help sustain the tenancy.

Poor life choices, (such as breaching the tenancy agreement, anti-social or criminal behaviour).

Alcohol and or substance misuse issues.

Complex health factors including mental health.

### Challenges

The Homelessness Review and responses from the consultation process identified the following challenges to preventing repeat homelessness:

**Tenancy sustainment** - The ability to access tenancy sustainment/support, regardless of tenure. The availability of tenancy sustainment support services. The timing of tenancy sustainment/support (whether support is offered at the beginning of the tenancy or not until the point the tenancy has started to fail). The duration of tenancy sustainment/support (some people may need ongoing support, rather than it being limited to the first few weeks of the tenancy for example). The type of tenancy support available, as some people may have specific needs (if living independently for the first time for example).

**Life choices** - Neither statutory nor non-statutory services can prevent a tenant from making poor life choices or misusing substances. Support can only be put in place to minimise the likelihood of such events, but ultimately it is the individual's decision to act in a manner that will put their tenancy at risk.



**Complex health factors** – The ability to access appropriate support for those with complex health factors, particularly mental health needs which may result in behaviour which puts their tenancy at risk.

**No fault evictions** - The private rental sector is buoyant and a household may be subject to a no fault eviction from any point after the end of the fixed term. It is not possible to prevent or influence this as it is a consequence of wider market conditions.

**Barriers** – Landlords in the private and social housing sector are unwilling to let to those who have a history of rent arrears, anti-social behaviour, offending and other challenging behaviour. Welfare reform is another barrier as the benefit cap can make renting in both sectors unaffordable.

### Action Taken

**SUPPORT** - When a household is placed into temporary accommodation with known support needs, where possible and with the agreement of the household, the Temporary Accommodation Support Officer works to ensure that appropriate support is provided either by the Council or an external agency. This includes support from the Homelessness Prevention and Money Management Service commissioned by the Council from Citizens Advice.

Where a household is assisted to access private rented accommodation via the Council's Rent in Advance and Deposit Guarantee Scheme, if there are known support needs they are offered support by the Private Sector Tenancy Negotiator and Sustainment Officer.

The Council's Employment Co-ordinator will ensure that households in need are receiving all the benefits they are entitled to and are provided with advice and assistance to enable them to find employment.

## Action Plan to Meet Priority Three: Preventing Recurring Homelessness

| Action   | Desired Outcomes   | Lead                              | Partners                                | Target Timescale |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|---|------------------|
| <b>3.1</b> Review the internal and external support services provided and explore opportunities to provide a more targeted and efficient service, particularly to those with complex needs, to intervene early to prevent recurring homelessness | Provision of tailored support (such as tenancy sustainment and debt advice).<br>Reduction in recurring homelessness amongst vulnerable households.<br>Reduced temporary accommodation costs to the Council.        | Housing Needs Team Manager (MSDC) | External providers of support           | April 2021       |
| <b>3.2</b> Work with registered providers to encourage them to provide tenancy sustainment support when they move on to their own tenancies to ensure that they do not end up being homeless again.  | Reduction in recurring homelessness by provision of appropriate support.<br>Reduction in recurring homelessness by provision of appropriate support.<br>Reduction in temporary accommodation costs to the Council. | Housing Needs Team Manager (MSDC) | RSLs & other external support providers | October 2021     |
| <b>3.3</b> Through the Homelessness Prevention and Tenancy Sustainment Protocol and the Tenancy Strategy, encourage registered providers to ensure that homelessness prevention is at the core of all tenancy policies and procedures            | Reduction in recurring homelessness by provision of appropriate support.<br>Reduction in temporary accommodation costs to the Council.   | Housing Needs Team Manager (MSDC) | RSLs                                    | Ongoing          |

|                   |  |  |                                       |   |                     |
|-------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------|
| <p><b>3.4</b></p> | <p>Pilot a Tenancy Training Programme targeted at those in Temporary Accommodation and assisted by the Council's Rent in Advance and Deposit Guarantee Scheme with the aim of breaking the cycle of homelessness and reducing the negative impact on those households.</p> | <p>Reduction in recurring homelessness.<br/>Reduction in temporary costs to the Council.<br/>Improved outcomes for households.</p> | <p>Private Sector Tenancy Officer</p> | <p>RSLs, external training resource</p> | <p>October 2021</p> |
|-------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------|

## PRIORITY FOUR: TACKLING ROUGH SLEEPING AND HOMELESSNESS AMONGST VULNERABLE GROUPS

### a) Rough Sleepers

Rough sleepers are defined as people seen either sleeping, about to bed down or actually bedded down in the open air (such as streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, sheds, car parks and cars) are also included in this definition.

Many rough sleepers have complex needs that can affect their willingness to engage with service providers and receive support. Even with support in place, some do not feel ready or able to engage with the services that are available. The Strategy identifies how services will tackle rough sleeping and ensure everyone has the opportunity to access accommodation when they need it.





The Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy published in August 2018 sets out its aim to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end rough sleeping by 2027. Its vision to achieve this is through three core principles, prevention, intervention and recovery. These principles will be used as the drivers for our approach to tackling rough sleeping.

### Challenges

The Homelessness review and responses from the consultation process identified the following challenges to tackling rough sleeping in Mid Sussex:

**Welfare reforms** - Single people under the age of 35 who are in receipt of benefits can only claim the shared room rate of the Local Housing Allowance, meaning the only housing option affordable to them in the private rented sector is a room in a shared house. A room in a shared house may not be an ideal environment for individuals who are vulnerable or have support needs and who may be liable to sleeping rough if they lose their accommodation. Furthermore, there is a shortage of this type of accommodation in Mid Sussex.



-  **Access to non-statutory services** - Whilst there is small amount of support available for rough sleepers in Mid Sussex, there is no specific supported accommodation service for this client group.
-  **Funding** – Funding for statutory and non-statutory services are under threat or are reducing nationally and locally. Across West Sussex the budget cuts that West Sussex County Council has made will have a significant impact on service provision.
-  **Accessing health services** - The ability to access mental health services and support as and when needed. Any delay in accessing services initially can result in an individual deciding not to engage in the future, potentially making them more susceptible to losing their accommodation, sleeping rough, or becoming resistant to support.
-  **Reactive services** - The majority of services that exist for single people with housing issues are reactive and respond at or after the point of crisis. The opportunity to prevent homelessness (and thereby minimise the risk of rough sleeping) having passed.

### Action Taken

- 1. MULTI AGENCY WORKING** – In partnership with WSCC and other West Sussex district and borough Councils we have jointly commissioned a service through Turning Tides (a community led homelessness organisation) to provide support to both entrenched rough sleepers and those new or at risk of rough sleeping. Turning Tides staff are co-located within the Housing Needs Team meaning that knowledge and expertise is shared to find suitable outcomes for individuals supported.
- 2. SHORE** - Mid Sussex District Council formed part of the Single Homeless Outreach Reconnection and Engagement (SHORE) Service from 2013-2017. This Sussex partnership was recognised as one of the best rough sleeping and single homelessness partnerships in the country by DCLG and Homeless Link. Through SHORE, hundreds of vulnerable people were helped out of homelessness and supported in their accommodation. Much of the work was delivered by voluntary organisations. SHORE also brought people together from multiple services at various events to help tackle the multiple and complex needs of rough sleepers. Funding for this service came to an end in 2017.
- 3. BID FUNDING** - Mid Sussex District Council was part of a successful Sussex wide Rough Sleeper bid to Government in 2016, receiving £470,000 to work with rough sleepers across East and West Sussex over two years. This coalition of partners included all District and Borough Councils across Sussex, East and West Sussex County Councils, Sussex Police, Clinical Commissioning Groups in Sussex, Fulfilling Lives, Community Safety Partnership and Safer West Sussex Partnership. The West Sussex target of 406 interventions for the duration of the project was met through an extension of the TAP Project through Crawley Open House for one year, an Arun Rough Sleeper Outreach worker for two years, Worthing Churches Outreach Worker for two years.

In the winter of 2018 Mid Sussex District Council was part of a successful West Sussex Countywide Rapid Rehousing Pathway Bid in partnership



with West Sussex County Council and all West Sussex District and Borough Council. The project is being delivered in partnership with Turning Tides, Crawley Open House and Stonepillow and has secured £355,000 to assist 160 – 180 individuals. Five Supported Lettings Officers across West Sussex will increase housing opportunities for those who have had a history of rough sleeping by encouraging landlords to come forward and can offer additional support to those placed in to accommodation. Four navigators will follow a rough sleeper from the street through to a range of accommodation services, being the constant and consistent connector between services and the individual.




The Council has also secured additional funding from the MHCLG Cold Weather Fund to provide more intensive support and accommodation for rough sleepers during the coldest months. **The first 2018/19 programme supported 6 individuals, 50% of whom did not return to rough sleeping and remain housed. The 2019/20 programme aims to provide an increased level of support and accommodation for a further 7 individuals most at risk.**

### b) Other Vulnerable Groups

In the context of the homelessness legislation, a person may be considered vulnerable and in priority need due to physical disability, mental illness, age, having been in care, having served in the armed forces, having been in custody or on remand, or fleeing their home due to actual or threatened violence. People who are vulnerable may require or benefit from additional support when accessing Council services and where possible and appropriate, the Council will endeavour to put such support in place.

## Challenges

The Homelessness Review and responses from the consultation process identified the following challenges to meeting the needs of vulnerable people:

-  **Supply of supported housing** - There are limited opportunities for accessing supported accommodation locally. Whilst there is some provision locally, the Council do not have exclusive direct access or nomination rights to all of these. Across West Sussex the budget cuts that West Sussex County Council has made will have a significant impact on service provision going forward.
-  **Access to health services** - Demand on health services (in particular mental health services) locally can result in people struggling to access assistance as and when needed. This can affect the individual's future willingness to engage. Historically there has been also a restriction of mental health services to those who have dual diagnosis and are not addressing their alcohol or substance misuse. This resulted in individuals not being able to access mental health services as and when needed.
-  **Temporary accommodation** – Accessing suitable supported accommodation for people with medium to high support needs is challenging. There are a small number of temporary accommodation units for people with support needs in Mid Sussex but these are for those with low to

medium support needs and single people only. Finding both temporary and settled accommodation for people who have been in custody and who are on remand can be challenging, as accommodation providers are able to refuse nominations.



**Tenancy sustainment** – Whilst being young does not necessarily make individuals vulnerable, if they are living independently for the first time they may benefit from support to help them acclimatise to the responsibilities that come with having a tenancy (regardless of whether living in the private rented sector or in social housing).



**Working in isolation** - Most services work in relative isolation from one another and within their own legal parameters and financial restraints. This can limit the ability across departments/organisations to flexibly respond to situations, best meet the needs of customers and make best use of limited resources.

### Action Taken

**1. MULTI AGENCY WORKING** - The Mid Sussex Partnership (MSP) is an overarching partnership of organisations working to improve the quality of residents' lives across the District. The MSP is led by Mid Sussex District Council and includes West Sussex County Council, Sussex Police, Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner, NHS West Sussex, Horsham and Mid Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group, Clarion Housing and Mid Sussex Voluntary Action Watch. The MSP support for the Early Intervention project (linked to the Troubled Families initiative) and the Targeted Intervention project to support vulnerable families in Mid Sussex to access support services where they do not have the means to pay.

The Council participates in multi-agency meetings with agencies including the Police and probation services to identify the accommodation options available to ex-offenders and create positive pathways, and for high risk victims of domestic abuse to provide advice and assistance from a housing perspective to help reduce the risk to those victims.

**2. ALLOCATIONS SCHEME** - Mid Sussex District Council's Allocations Scheme has been amended to enable people who are in or have served in the armed forces to access social housing regardless of local connection. They are also given priority within their band above applicants who do not have an armed forces connection.

The Council's Allocations Scheme provides specific move-on arrangements for vulnerable households from supported housing and the resulting vacancy is used to prevent and/or relieve homelessness for other vulnerable households requiring the support being offered where possible.

**3. CREATING PATHWAYS** - Mid Sussex District Council has been engaging with local services to identify and provide housing pathways for vulnerable service users. This has been challenging given the pressures many statutory and non-statutory services are under, and is on-going work.

We continue to develop working relationship between agencies and local mental health services in order to better assist service users with mental health issues to achieve successful outcomes. A Hospital Discharge Worker employed by Southdown Housing through WSCC identifies housing pathways for people who are at risk of being discharged from hospital with no onward accommodation.

**4. SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION PROVISION** – The Council has supported housing provision for young people (including care leavers), young parents and those with mental health or other support needs through the Resettlement panel and the supported housing resettlement service. These services are funded by West Sussex County Council through its Housing Related Support budget. However this budget is subject to significant cuts.

An important local context for the Homelessness Strategy is West Sussex County Council's reduction in the Housing Related Support budget from £6.4 million to £2.3 million by April 2020. The services impacted include specialist accommodation based schemes for residents who are at risk of homelessness, as well as "floating support" to residents living in the community. Risks from the withdrawal of these services include increasing pressure on the homelessness services, rising costs of placing families and adults in temporary accommodation and increasing numbers of intentional homelessness. A West Sussex Supported Housing Task and Finish Group was established to mitigate the impact of these reductions, identifying other funding sources and longer term service redesign. The Group includes West Sussex County Council and District and Borough Councils; WSCC have retained responsibility albeit at a reduced level of resources for funding a number of the housing support services including those providing assistance to single homeless people through hostels and outreach services as well as for young people. Consultants were commissioned to assist with reviewing all the existing services and the levels and types of need across the county. The Task and Finish Group has established a new commissioning framework that will utilise the remaining WSCC funding as well as some match funding from the district and boroughs to provide a service for vulnerable households with support needs, many of whom will be owed legal duties under the homelessness legislation. The service for Mid Sussex will be jointly commissioned by MSDC and WSCC in accordance with a county wide specification, which is based on seven design principles as follows:

- To build on strengths
- To adopt a whole systems approach
- To design develop and deliver together
- To be focused, efficient and valued
- To be outcome based
- To be dynamic and resilient
- To be coherent, simple and accessible

A set of quarterly monitoring returns and meetings with the provider will be established through the commissioning process to ensure the service objectives and positive outcomes for service users are maintained.

**5. WELFARE BENEFIT SUPPORT** - With the introduction and roll-out of Universal Credit, the Council delivered budgeting support, debt advice and advice with benefit claims to households moving on to Universal Credit in partnership with Citizens Advice and the Job Centre Plus. Mid Sussex District Council set up a working group that continues to operate and is attended by relevant local partners to discuss best practice and provide updates on these issues.

**6. DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS** - Mid Sussex District Council has been actively involved in a countywide project to streamline the Disabled Facility Grant process and to minimise the need for households to move if appropriate property adaptations can be made enabling them to remain in their homes as their needs change.

## Action Plan to Meet Priority Four: Tackling Rough Sleeping & Homelessness amongst vulnerable groups

| Action                | Desired Outcomes   | Lead   | Partners                            | Target Timescale   |                                  |
|-----------------------|--|--|-------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| <b>Rough Sleepers</b> |  |  |                                     |  |                                  |
| <b>4.1</b>            | Work with partners to explore the possibility of establishing a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Forum                    | Better partnership working to assist rough sleepers off the street and into accommodation and or treatment pathways. Halve the number of rough sleepers in Mid Sussex from 10 in November 2018 to 5 or less in March 2022 in accordance with the Governments Rough Sleeper Strategy. | Housing Needs Team Manager (MSDC)   | Turning Tides, Community Mental Health Team, CGL, Citizens Advice, Local Pastoral Groups, Sussex Police, Community Safety Teams, Other Partners to be identified | Forum to be set up by April 2021 |
| <b>4.2</b>            | Identify vulnerable households at risk of rough sleeping early and intervene to prevent this occurring wherever possible | Early identification to maximise potential to prevent rough sleeping   | Senior Housing Needs Officer (MSDC) | Turning Tides, Community Mental Health Team, CGL, Citizens Advice, Sussex Police, Probation, Community Safety Teams  | 2020 - 2025                      |

|                                |  |  |  |  |   |
|--------------------------------|--|--|--|--|---|
| <b>4.3</b>                     | Deliver effective services, to include provision of an outreach service for those people who are sleeping rough or imminently at risk of doing so, to support rough sleepers into sustainable accommodation. | Targeted support for those who are sleeping rough or are in danger of doing.<br><br>Ensure funding is acquired/ provided to provide ongoing support to rough sleepers. | Housing Needs Team Manager (MSDC) and Senior Housing Needs Officer (MSDC)              | WSCC & District and Borough Councils, Turning Tides. | Bid for Rough Sleeping Initiative Funding for 2020 submitted by 6 December 2019 |
| <b>4.4</b>                     | Examine feasibility of introducing Housing First Support Model for Rough Sleepers in Mid Sussex  | Provision of accommodation for rough sleepers.<br>Provision of ongoing support to those accommodated.  | Business Unit Leader for Housing Services (MSDC) and Housing Needs Team Manager (MSDC) | RSLs, Turning Tides,                                 | To be set up by August 2021   |
| <b>4.5</b>                     | Continue to bid for future Cold Weather Payment funding as and when available  | Extended winter provision funding awarded to assist rough sleepers, including the provision of accommodation and support during the cold weather                       | Housing Needs Team Manager (MSDC) and Senior Housing Needs Officer (MSDC)              | Turning Tides  | Bid for winter 2019/20 submitted and approved.                                  |
| <b>Other Vulnerable Groups</b> |  |  |  |  |   |
| <b>4.6</b>                     | Increase the supply of suitable temporary accommodation in the district for people with mental health needs  | Increase in supported temporary accommodation in the district enabling those with mental health needs to maintain their support networks including health              | Housing Needs Team Manager (MSDC)  | Temporary Accommodation Providers                    | October 2021  |

|      |   |   |  |   |  |
|------|---|---|--|---|--|
| 4.7  | Continue to engage with hospital discharge teams to ensure an effective working protocol is in place  | Enable managed moves from hospitals and prevent emergency discharge presentations   | Housing Co-Ordinator – Mental Health (WSCC), Senior Housing Needs Officer (MSDC) | Hospital Discharge worker (Langley Green Hospital)                    | Agreed Protocol to be in place by October 2020 |
| 4.8  | Continue to work with stakeholders and partners to identify and provide clear housing pathways for vulnerable groups.   | Pathway Plans in the form of a Personal Housing Plan in place for vulnerable groups to prevent homelessness.  | Housing Needs Team Manager (MSDC) and Senior Housing Needs Officer (MSDC)        | Relevant partner agencies   | August 2021                                    |
| 4.9  | Work in partnership with West Sussex districts and boroughs and West Sussex county council to Review the Joint Protocols for 16/17 year olds and care leavers   | 16/17 year olds and Care Leavers facing homelessness receive the appropriate support and avoid placements into temporary accommodation. Homelessness prevented amongst young people.    | Housing Needs Team Manager (MSDC)  | WSCC and District and Borough Councils in West Sussex                 | Ongoing. Review of Protocols by April 2021.    |
| 4.10 | Input into the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC), which considers how individual domestic violence cases can be best managed, referring victims of domestic abuse to the relevant support services such as WORTH for immediate support and Safe in Sussex services which supplies longer term floating support | Fewer people fleeing domestic abuse at point of crisis. Increased resilience for individuals suffering domestic abuse. Increased homelessness prevention for victims of domestic abuse. | Senior Housing Needs Officer (MSDC)  | WSCC, Worth, Safe in Sussex, Sussex Police and other partner agencies | 2020 - 2025                                    |

|      |   |   |   |   |  |
|------|---|---|---|---|--|
| 4.11 | Work closely with supported housing providers to ensure clear housing pathways are in place to facilitate planned move on   | Homelessness prevented amongst vulnerable households  | Housing Needs Team Manager (MSDC) and WSCC                            | Peabody, Sussex Oakleaf, YMCA, Hope Into Action, RSLs, Resettlement Panel   | 2020 - 2025  |
| 4.12 | Work in partnership with District and Boroughs and WSCC to reconfigure and recommission supported housing to meet the needs of those that require this type of support.   | Homelessness prevented amongst vulnerable households. Enhanced partnership working.   | Business Unit Leader for Housing Services (MSDC)                      | WSCC, District & Boroughs, Supported housing providers  | Recommissioned service to be in place by October 2020  |
| 4.13 | Input into the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and the Integrated Offender Management Scheme (IOM) to assist with the management of those who are a serious risk to the public and/or prolific offenders. | Reduction in re-offending rates amongst ex-offenders. Close working relationship with Probation, Police and support providers<br>Engagement with services managing offenders to prevent homelessness. | Probation & Sussex Police   | Housing Needs Team, CGL, WSCC   | 2020 - 2025  |
| 4.14 | Continue to be actively involved in the countywide Disabled Facilities Grant project to ensure DFGs are used effectively to achieve homelessness prevention when applicable.  | Minimise the need for households to move and enable them to remain in their homes as their needs change.  | West Sussex County Adaptations Manager, Housing Standards Team Leader | Project Working group, Steering group, all West Sussex district and borough councils, WSCC, Public Health and NHS | Revised countywide common policy due to be implemented from January 2020<br>Review of policy impact and assessment of potential for single pooled budget August/September 2020 |

|             |   |  |                                     |  |            |
|-------------|---|--|-------------------------------------|--|------------|
| <b>4.15</b> | Create and share a directory of statutory, non-statutory, voluntary and charitable services to assist people affected by homelessness in Mid Sussex | Knowledge of services available locally easily assessable for the public and agencies  | Senior Housing Needs Officer (MSDC) |  | April 2021 |
| <b>4.16</b> | Provide Housing Staff with specific training in mental health issues.   | Increase staff knowledge and confidence in dealing with priority need assessments and support requirements for this vulnerable group | Senior Housing Needs Officer (MSDC) | Community Mental Health Services, Training Providers | April 2021 |



## PRIORITY FIVE: ENABLE ACCESS TO SUITABLE AND AFFORDABLE ACCOMMODATION

The housing market has seen considerable change and continues to evolve in response to local pressures and the wider economic climate. Nationally we have seen the private rental sector grow, partially in response to market conditions and partially due to the widening disparity between incomes and housing costs. As rates of home ownership decline the need to be able to access accommodation across multiple tenures to discharge the Councils duties under the homelessness legislation is significant.

### Challenges

The Homelessness Review and responses from the consultation process identified the following challenges to accessing suitable and affordable housing in Mid Sussex:



**Welfare reforms** - The cumulative impact of welfare reforms on affordability and a households ability to access settled housing, combined with the gap between wages and/or benefits and housing costs. Finding affordable housing for single people, especially those under the age of 35 can be difficult, with housing options restricted to a room in a shared house.



**The private rented sector** - Mortgage lenders, letting agents and landlords continue to deny access to the private rented sector to households in receipt of benefits. Those that are able to access the sector face upfront costs (rent in advance, deposit, agency fees) of up to £2,500. In addition, some households on a low income or in receipt of benefits do not have a guarantor whose earnings could cover the rental commitment.



**Supported accommodation** - Accessing suitable settled accommodation for people with support needs can be difficult, their needs may be considered to be too high and there are also issues of affordability.



**Funding** – Funding for statutory and non-statutory services is under threat or being cut as budgets are reduced.



**Social housing** - Registered providers of social housing apply their own criteria for



assessing nominations into their social housing and this can result in nominations being refused if criteria is not met.

**Temporary Accommodation** - The Council have a small portfolio of temporary accommodation and limited access to self-contained temporary accommodation that is wheelchair accessible. Nightly paid guest house accommodation is expensive for the Council to use and only suitable in an emergency.

### Action Taken

**1. HOUSES OF MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMO) LICENCING** - In October 2018 the law changed and any accommodation that is occupied by five or more people from two or more households with shared facilities requires a licence. The Council's Housing Standards Team have been working hard to ensure Landlords are aware of their new responsibilities and to meet HMO licence application demands.

**2. STANDARDS IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR** - The Council's Housing Standards Team have taken the opportunity of the change in legislation to work with a greater number of landlords to achieve compliance and raise the standard of shared accommodation in Mid Sussex's private rented sector. Our new Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy has introduced a number of measures to assist with dealing with unscrupulous landlords.

**3. HOUSING DELIVERY** - MSDC's affordable Housing Policy DP31 requires that all residential development over the threshold of 11 units or > 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> should provide 30 % affordable housing. In addition, in areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, (AONB) sites between 6 and 10 units (<1000m<sup>2</sup>) are required to provide the equivalent of 30% in the form of a commuted sum for off-site provision. The Housing Enabling Team aim to utilise every opportunity to meet the need for affordable housing through the application of our planning policies as well as working directly with housing associations and other affordable housing providers and maximising affordable housing on MSDC owned sites.

**4. EMPTY HOMES** – MSDC has worked in partnership with the YMCA to bring empty homes back into use which have been used to relieve homelessness.

## Action Plan Meet Priority Five: Enable Access to Suitable and Affordable Accommodation

| Action                                 |   | Desired Outcomes   | Lead  | Partners           | Target Timescale |
|--|---|--|---|--------------------|------------------|
| <b>Make best use of existing stock</b> |   |  |   |                    |                  |
| <b>5.1</b>                             | Maximise the number of empty homes brought back into usage to provide more accommodation supply in the district   | Increased number of Empty Homes brought back into use to prevent homelessness.   | Housing Enabling Team Manager (MSDC)                                    | Revenues (MSDC)    | 2020 - 2025      |
| <b>5.2</b>                             | Work in partnership with Registered Social Landlords to apply the Tenancy Sustainment and Homelessness Prevention Protocol making best use of stock and ensure nominations are not unfairly rejected. | Best use of social housing and homelessness prevented for more households  | Housing Need Team Manager (MSDC)  | RSL, Homemove Team | 2020 - 2025      |
| <b>5.3</b>                             | Review and update the Tenancy Strategy setting out the Council's expectations of social housing providers.  | To ensure fair and equitable allocation in line with the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme, ensuring that it prioritises Homelessness Prevention, tenancy sustainment, affordability and security for tenants. | BUL Housing Needs and Enabling Team managers (MSDC)                     | RSL's              | April 2021       |
| <b>5.4</b>                             | Monitor void turnaround times of the main social housing providers in the district  | Delays do not impact on capacity to meet housing need and the length of time households need to occupy temporary accommodation   | Business Unit Leader for Housing with Housing Needs Team Manager (MSDC) | RSLs               | 2020 - 2025      |

| <b>Deliver more new affordable homes</b>                 |  |  |   |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|--|---|
| <b>5.5</b>   | Work closely with development partners to maximise the development of affordable homes   | Increase the supply of affordable homes to prevent homelessness. Ensure that the required proportion and relevant type of affordable homes are delivered | Housing Enabling Team Manager   | Housing Providers, Developers, Planning (MSDC), Legal (MSDC) | Target 200 new affordable homes a year 2020 to 2025 |
| <b>5.6</b>   | Maximise affordable housing delivery on all MSDC owned sites brought forward for disposal.   | Creation of affordable properties.   | Business Unit Leader for Housing Services   | Legal (MSDC), Planning (MSDC)                                | 2020 - 2025   |
| <b>Improving standards in the private rented sector</b>  |  |  |   |  |   |
| <b>5.7</b>   | Identify accommodation that requires but have not yet applied for a HMO licence and work with landlords to meet their legal responsibilities and improve standards where needed. | Ensure that properties that require a HMO licence have one and improve standards of accommodation  | Business Unit Leader Environmental Health & Building Control (MSDC)                     | Housing Needs (MSDC), Private landlords, letting agents      | 2020 - 2025   |
| <b>Meet the need for new gypsy and traveller pitches</b> |  |  |   |  |   |
| <b>5.8</b>   | Support the work required by DP33 in the Mid Sussex District Plan  | Ensure that a sufficient amount of culturally suitable housing for settled Gypsies and Travellers to meet the identified need.                           | Business Unit Leader for Housing Services (MSDC) & Housing Enabling Team Manager (MSDC) | Planning and Economic Development and Legal Services (MSDC)  | 23 additional pitches to be provided by 2031        |

## **DELIVERING THE STRATEGY**

### **Consultation**

Mid Sussex District Council carried out a consultation as part of the review into homelessness in the district. The Council consulted with residents, service users, partners and stake holders. The consultation was undertaken via a consultation event and an online survey in which over 244 individuals and partner organisations were invited to contribute their views and perceptions of homelessness within the district. The results of this consultation have been used to inform and develop the strategy and determine its priorities.

### **Working in Partnership**

Whilst the provision of services to homeless households is a statutory duty of the Council, in practice the delivery of the service benefits from the support of many formal and informal partners including West Sussex County Council, registered providers, support organisations and agencies including the voluntary and charitable sectors. We will continue to work closely with these partners if we are to realise the ambitions of the strategy. Partnership working across the statutory and non-statutory sectors will become increasingly critical to efficiently utilise resources and deliver effective outcomes for customers. The Action Plan expands upon how we will work with partner agencies to deliver the actions identified in the Strategy between 2020 – 2025.

### **Monitoring and Review**

The Strategy has been developed in consultation with partners and stakeholders, who will continue to be involved in the delivery of the Strategy and Action Plan. The progress against the targets and outcomes set out in the Action Plan will be reviewed annually.