

Draft Homeless Prevention & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025

DRAFT V4





Foreword

Councillor Simon Clist, Cabinet Member for Housing

I am very pleased to introduce the Council's homelessness prevention and rough sleeping strategy for the period 2020 to 2025.

A review of homelessness and the likely future levels of it in our District has informed the strategy. Evidence gathered during the review of relevant data is available separately using the following link to relevant pages on the Council's website:

Add in link TBC

We have also reviewed the data regarding the local housing market which has been produced by the Local Government Association:

LGA (2019), Understanding Local Housing Markets, Local Government Association, 29 July 2019

<https://www.local.gov.uk/understanding-local-housing-markets>

Homelessness can have a major impact on the lives of the individuals concerned; their health, well-being, learning and employment may be affected by the lack of stable accommodation. Our strategy sets out how we will address rough sleeping. However, it also contains other objectives. Homelessness is a complex issue and the vast majority of those who approach the Council as homeless are not sleeping outside. There are many reasons as to why someone may be homeless; for example, they may be living in private rented accommodation where their tenancy is about to end through no fault of their own; or facing eviction from their home due to an inability to pay the mortgage or the rent.

As part of the work to develop the strategy, stakeholders were consulted and their feedback was invaluable in helping us to agree the four objectives which are set out below:

1. Minimising rough sleeping
2. Maximising prevention activities & outcomes
3. Increasing accommodation options
4. Improving health & wellbeing by supporting those with complex needs

In recent years, we have developed our approach to the prevention and management of homelessness and I am proud to note that the Council is delivering a homelessness prevention service which compares well with that of other local authorities nationally.

During 2018/19, the Council was involved in two successful bids to secure funding from Central Government to support work with rough sleepers, or those at risk of rough sleeping. More information about the initiatives we have established using these grant monies is included in the strategy. Unfortunately, this funding is time limited and at the time of writing, is only available for 2019/20 meaning that the Council has no certainty about the availability of further funding to support this work in the future, after 31 March 2020, which is a source of some concern.

However, I am hopeful that the actions set out in this plan will help to address issues identified. We have identified the problems and are committed to working in partnership with other agencies, as appropriate, to prevent and manage homelessness wherever possible.

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4. Improving health & wellbeing by supporting those with complex needs

4 Monitoring & Reviewing the Strategy

Consultation

The review of the strategy was informed by consultation with stakeholders including Members of the Council, Officers, advice agencies and other partners including the Police.

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in Mid Devon

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 – overview

The [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#) was implemented with effect from April 2018 and brought about significant changes to the way that homelessness must be prevented and managed.

The existing legislation arose from the [Housing Act 1996](#) which was amended by the [Homelessness Act 2002](#). In accordance with this, anyone who was homeless could approach the local authority for advice. The Council was obliged to provide accommodation to those in priority groups which included those who were vulnerable due to age or medical issues, or those with dependent children. There was no obligation to provide accommodation to those who did not fall into one of the priority groups.

In accordance with the provisions of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the Council is duty bound to make investigations if someone at risk of becoming homeless approaches it for assistance. If it is established that there is a threat of this, then the Council has a statutory obligation to work with that person for 56 days in order to prevent them from becoming homeless. This may include helping them to find alternative accommodation.

After the expiry of the 56 days, and if the household becomes homeless, the Council is obliged to work to relieve the homelessness for a further 56 days. The new legislation was introduced with the aim of ensuring that more prevention work is undertaken and therefore there is a duty on local authorities to work with clients to develop personal housing plans. These plans set out what both parties need to do to ensure that the client moves on to settled accommodation. These plans may include reference to the liaison required between the Council and the existing landlord, for example. However, they may also include actions for the client such as the need to contact local lettings agencies in order to find suitable alternative accommodation in the private sector. The Council may end the duty to the client if they fail to do what is required of them in line with the personal housing plan.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 also introduced a “[duty to refer](#)” which means that certain external agencies must refer people or households which they believe to be at risk of homelessness. In accordance with this, registered providers of social housing will refer cases where possession action is pending or where there is an eviction date in the diary to enable the Housing Options team to work to prevent that homelessness.

The new legislation also introduced more opportunities for homeless clients to appeal decisions made in relation to their cases.

The new legislation has introduced some significant challenges which have had an impact upon resources. In particular, significant case work arises as a result of the Duty to Refer, which involves other agencies notifying the team about cases where there is a concern. In addition, the development of [Personal Housing Plans](#) is time-consuming which can impact upon the number of active cases which a Housing Options Officer can manage.

The Housing Market in Mid Devon

The cost of purchasing a home in Mid Devon is relatively high. During 2018, the average house price in Mid Devon was £235,000. This represented more than 8 times the average local annual income.

High private rents in Mid Devon also appear to be an issue. The overall median private rent was £625, which was approximately the same as the England average of £690 whilst earnings are less than the England average.

Housing Need in Mid Devon

The Council works in partnership with the other local authorities and providers of social housing in Devon to assess housing need. Housing applicants are banded in accordance with the assessment framework with A being the band of greatest need, and E being the band of no housing need.

The Devon Home Choice website www.devonhomechoice.com contains information relating to housing need across Devon on the useful information page.

It should be noted that a notable demand for 1 bedroom accommodation in the District is evident. In addition, finding suitable accommodation for larger families in housing need can be problematic given the lack of larger homes in Mid Devon..

The Council's own stock is impacted by sales arising from the Right to Buy and interest in the scheme continues with 67 sales in the period from April 2016 to March 2019.

In Mid Devon, the Council is the largest provider of social housing but a number of other social providers also have homes in the District. During 2018/19, 270 homes designated as being for those with general need were let by all providers together with 40 accessible homes for people who are vulnerable due to age or other need.

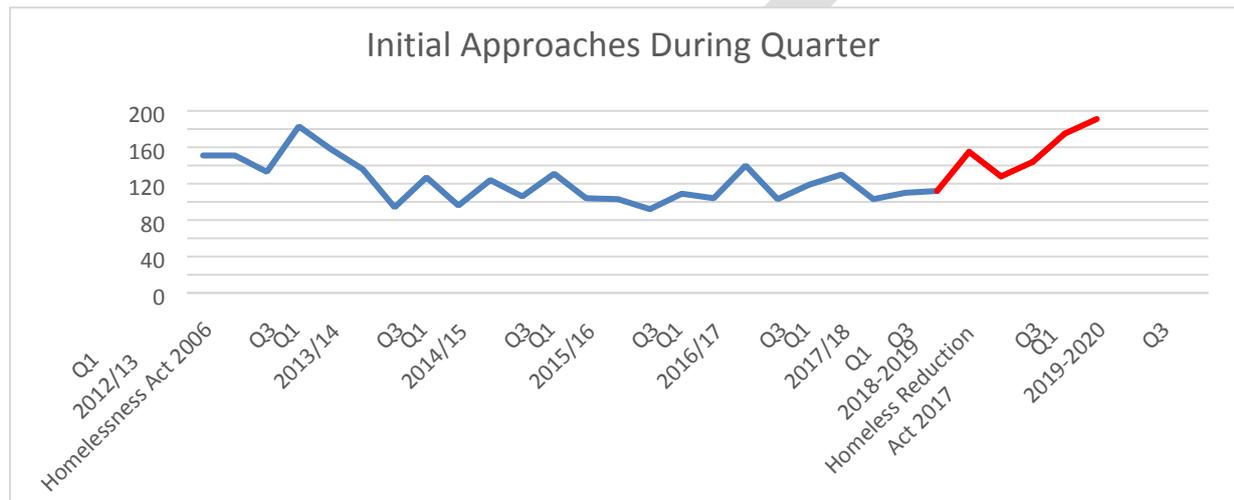
High demand for social housing is set to continue because many households which appear to be adequately housed experience affordability issues. The rural nature of the District means that some young people struggle to afford to stay in their local village close to family and friends because they cannot find suitable affordable accommodation there. Those in housing need may wait a long time for suitable alternative accommodation. For example, a household in Band C requiring 3 bedroom accommodation will have to wait 45 weeks on average before successfully bidding for

a home; and a household in Band D requiring a 1 bedroom home will have to wait 63 weeks on average.

Households Approaching the Council for Help

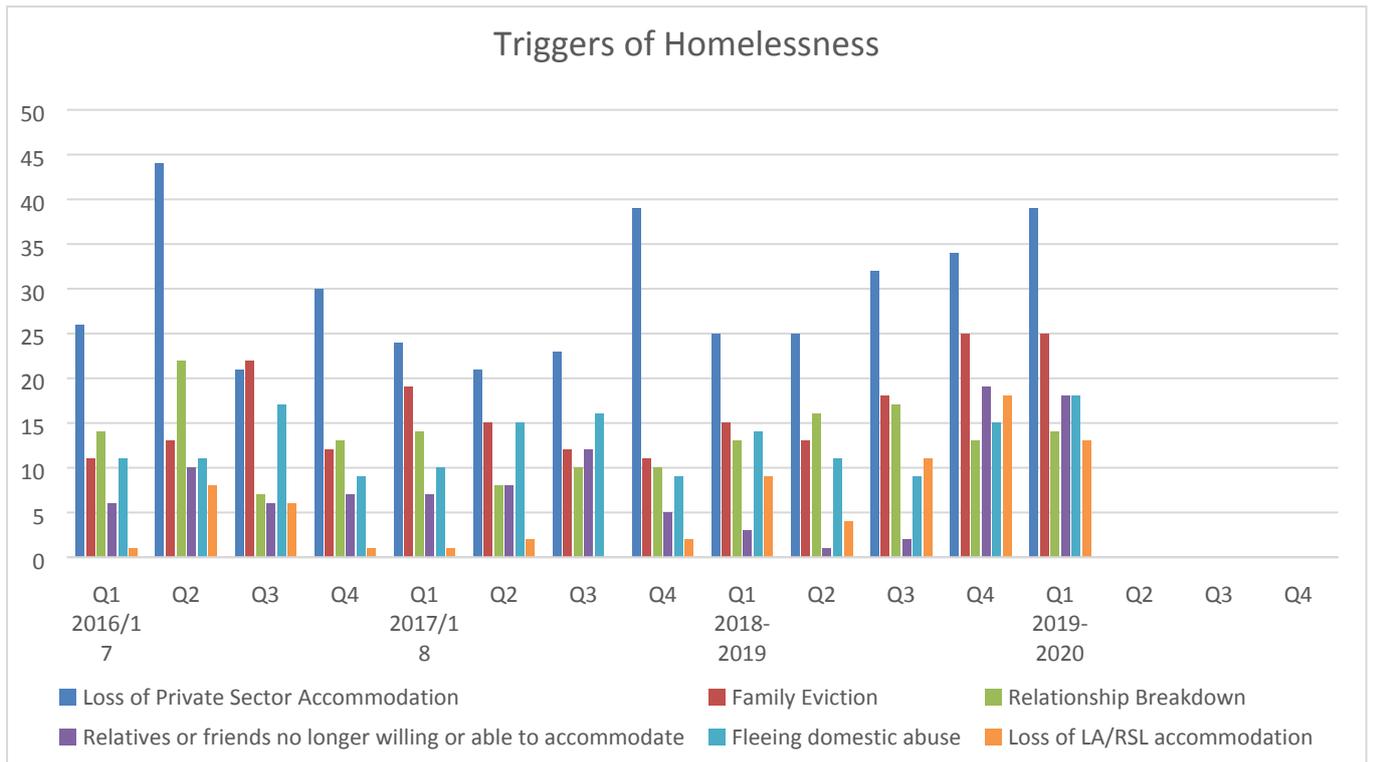
This data review reflects the position as at the end of June 2019.

Since the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017, the number of applicants presenting as homeless has increased by 25% rising from 455 in 2017/18 to 602 in 2018/19. In 2019/20, the number increased to 191, an increasing trend set to continue.



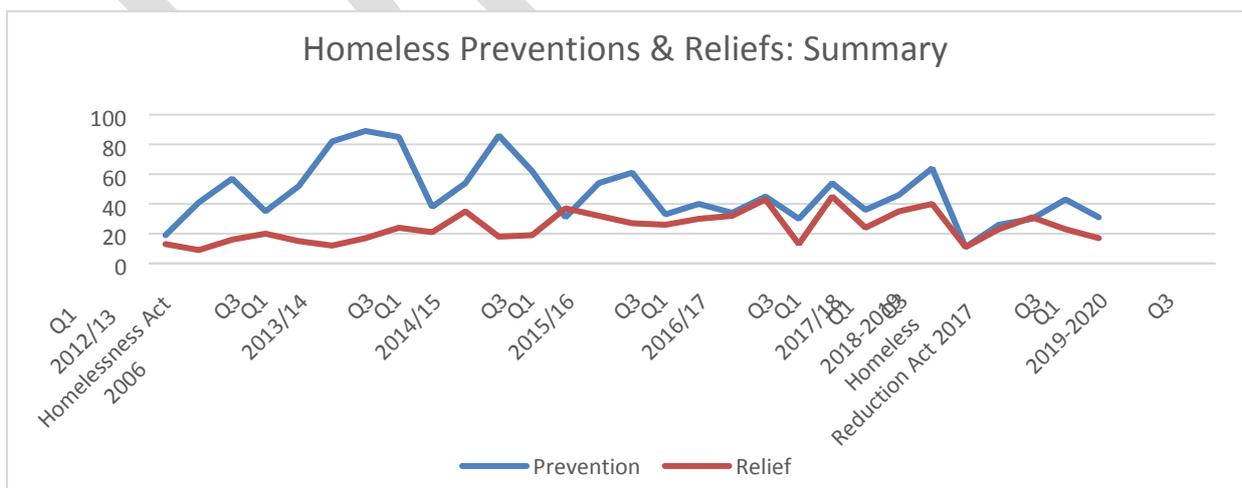
Triggers of homelessness in Mid Devon

The main cause of homelessness during 2018/19 arose from the loss of a home in the private rented sector. However, there has been an increase in the number of approaches from those being evicted by social landlords in the period from April 2018 and this is becoming a significant cause of homelessness in Mid Devon. Those who have been asked to leave by family and friends have also made up a significant proportion of those who have presented as homeless in recent years, which is why mediation is seen as an important tool in the prevention of homelessness.



Homeless Prevention

The Homeless Reduction Act 2017 introduced a number of duties for local authorities, which included those relating to [prevention](#) and [relief](#). The number of cases where homelessness has been successfully prevented or relieved has reduced over the past 12 months due to the way the Government records homelessness statistics.



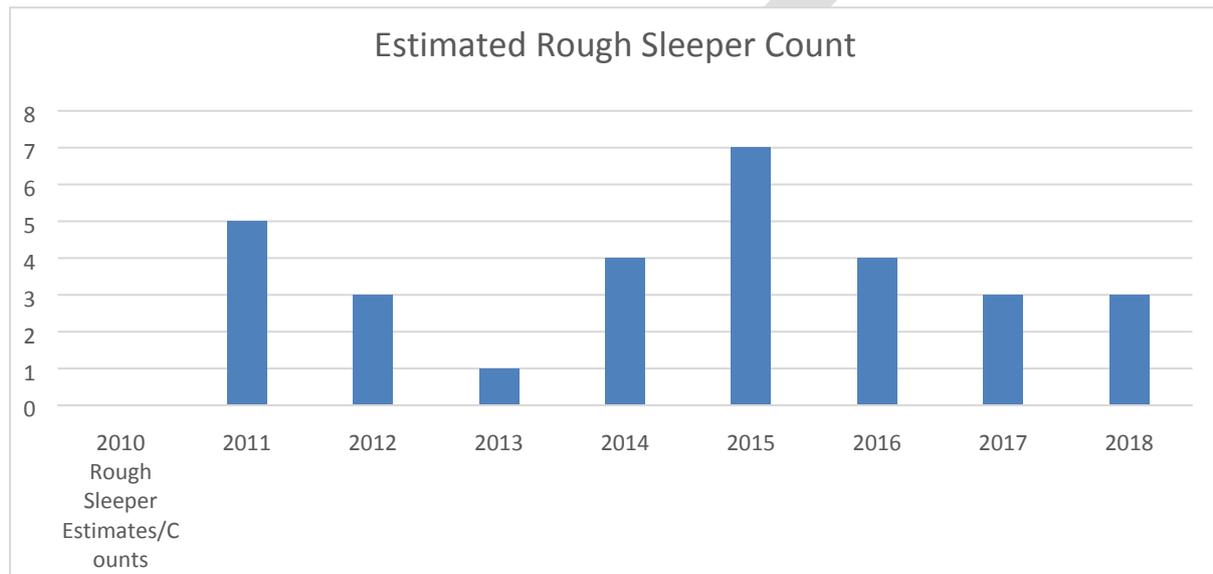
Budgetary implications arising from the need to accommodate more households on a temporary basis drive the need to ensure that Officers are operating a dynamic system

of management relating to temporary accommodation in order to minimise expenditure.

Rough sleeping

The [Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government](#) has set a target to reduce rough sleeping by half by 2022 and to end it completely by 2027.

The Government co-ordinates a rough sleeper count every November and in 2018 3 rough sleepers were identified in Mid Devon.



Targeted work with rough sleepers has resulted in more being identified in the District and it is therefore anticipated that the number counted during November 2019 will be larger than previously.

The roll out of [Universal Credit](#) (UC) continues. As at 31 July 2019, the Council had 769 customers in receipt of this benefit, which was introduced to replace 6 other benefits for working age people. These benefits include Housing Benefit. The [Department of Work and Pensions](#) (DWP) has estimated that 3 million people will be in receipt of UC nationally by the end of 2019.

The increasing trend associated with eviction from rented accommodation across all tenures suggests that welfare reform is having a significant impact on the ability of tenants to pay the rent. The increasing commercialisation of some registered providers of social housing is also impacting the work of the Council with regard to the prevention and management of homelessness because some are now undertaking pre-tenancy affordability assessments which mean that some housing applicants are having their bids for homes bypassed on tenancy sustainability grounds.

Economic uncertainty must also be taken into account and it is anticipated that fuel prices may increase following recent disputes in the Middle East. In a rural District such as Mid Devon such increases can have a detrimental impact upon the poorest in

society due to the increasing cost of travel to school and work, increased food prices and other expenditure.

Furthermore, it is anticipated that the economic uncertainty associated with the probable departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union could impact the private rented sector and the Council needs to prepare for a potential loss of homes in the District if interest rates rise.

Challenges in Mid Devon

Mid Devon is a predominantly rural area and this delivers some significant challenges in terms of service delivery. It is a large District and the distances involved make it more difficult to support those **sleeping rough** in outlying areas. In addition, the nature of the District means that it can be hard for clients to access appropriate services. For example, the cost of travel may be prohibitive; however, a lack of awareness could also be significant given that specialist services may be located in neighbouring areas.

There is a **lack of suitable short-term temporary accommodation** in the area. Some Council homes are leased to provide temporary homes but the numbers are not sufficient to alleviate the need for more short-term accommodation.

Finding suitable accommodation for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness is a challenge in Mid Devon. There is **high demand for affordable accommodation** and finding homes in the social, private and supported sectors can be very difficult due to a shortage of homes which those on low incomes can afford.

The ability to access a home in the private sector can be difficult for vulnerable people, especially those with a history of debt. Private landlords, especially in rural areas, are sometimes reluctant to accept payment plans or payments made by the Council through the Deposit and Advance Rent scheme.

Finding suitable accommodation for those with high support needs can be challenging. In Devon, multi-agency partnerships are organised into locality based hubs; these hubs help to join up the wider multi-agency managed homelessness resources of a locality, from buildings and statutory practitioners, to the Devon County Council (DCC) funded elements of support available. This support complements partner and practitioner led help with housing issues, mental health problems, drug and alcohol dependencies, street culture activities and institutional experiences, such as prison or the care system.

The Council is part of the Eastern Hub with Exeter City Council and East Devon District Council. There are some schemes in Exeter which will accommodate those with complex needs but there is competition for bed spaces. The contract allows floating support provided by a third party but this may not always be the most appropriate option for those who have high support needs.

Strategic Aims and Priorities

1 Minimise rough sleeping

The Council was involved in successful bids for funding to support this work during 2019/20. Unfortunately, this funding is time limited and, at the time of writing, in October 2019, there is no indication as to whether or not it will be extended into 2020/21 or future years.

The Rough Sleeper Navigator

Five authorities, including the Council, were able to secure monies to support work with rough sleepers or those at risk of rough sleeping from the Rough Sleeper Initiative funding stream provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). This funding is time limited and will only be available until March 2020, meaning that the Council has no certainty about the availability of further funding to support this work in the future, after 31 March 2020.

This enabled the continuation of the work previously undertaken by [Julian House](#) which was funded through the joint Trailblazer bid that ended on 31 March 2019. Prior to this new funding stream, Julian House investigated the reports received through the [StreetLink](#) service by visiting the District once a week.

StreetLink is a non-profit organisation managed and delivered by [Homeless Link](#) in partnership with [St Mungo's](#). It is principally funded by MHCLG with additional funding from other Government agencies. Streetlink operates a service which enables members of the public to report any rough sleepers. Streetlink alerts the Council to any incidences of rough sleeping and these are all investigated by our own staff.

The Council is hosting a full time worker throughout 2019/20 to provide an outreach service for rough sleepers, or those at risk of rough sleeping, in the District. This navigator plays a crucial role in the resettlement of rough sleepers, providing a comprehensive service to a caseload of clients who are currently sleeping rough or who have a recent history of rough sleeping in Mid Devon. The aim is to build trust and to provide person centred advocacy and support, which enables clients to navigate pathways and to progress towards a life away from the streets, therefore reducing rough sleeping within the Mid Devon area.

The Rough Sleeping Initiative bid

Working with East Devon District Council, the Council obtained monies to support effective outreach to those who are sleeping rough, or who may be at risk of sleeping rough. Both housing authorities now have additional funding to boost the service provided by their own rough sleeper navigators and also to support those who may be at risk of rough sleeping. This funding was also obtained from the Rough Sleeper Initiative funding stream made available by the MHCLG. It is also limited to the financial

year 2019/20 and currently there have been no announcements as to whether or not it will continue past March 2020.

The challenge is to ensure that engagement is meaningful and that clients are supported to seek housing options which they will be able to sustain going forward.

Mid Devon will continue to address and prioritise Rough Sleeping and in particular the wider issues relating to perceptions and to tenancy sustainment. To try and alleviate the stigma around rough sleepers, together with East Devon District Council, we have developed [Housing First](#) projects in both Districts. The management of these projects has been contracted to [Bournemouth Churches Housing Association](#) (BCHA), a specialist provider with extensive experience of providing floating support to this client group.

Three properties in each District have been made available for use by those who have been sleeping rough, or who are risk of it. Housing First is a model which has been used successfully in Finland and elsewhere and which provides extensive, tailored support to homeless people with complex needs. A key part of our approach will be to work with other agencies to ensure that clients are receiving all the support which they need to enable them to sustain a tenancy.

There are a number of key local partnerships in Mid Devon.

As mentioned earlier, the Council works closely with DCC in the Eastern hub. As a result of this partnership, homeless clients in the District are able to access floating support and some bed spaces at schemes in Exeter.

The Council works in partnership with other strategic housing authorities in Devon to prevent homelessness and to reduce the number of rough sleepers. The Devon and Cornwall Housing Options Partnership involves all authorities in Devon and Cornwall and delivers a consistent approach to the prevention and management of homelessness across the peninsula, this also includes the Devon and Cornwall Rough Sleepers Partnership.

[The Churches Housing Action Team](#) (CHAT) is an important partner based in Tiverton. CHAT runs the foodbank in Tiverton and provides emergency food packs to rough sleepers. In Mid Devon, CHAT also assists rough sleepers with seeking accommodation and helping them to secure homes in the private sector. In addition, there is a shower available at their office and the charity will also wash clothes for those who have no other means of doing this. CHAT receives grant funding from the Council and the existing award covers the period to the end of March 2020.

[The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol \(SWEP\)](#)

In partnership with all the other authorities in Devon and Cornwall, the Council has agreed a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol which has two aims. Firstly, it is designed to ensure that no one dies on the streets due to extreme cold or severe weather. It should also ensure that every effort is made to engage with rough sleepers

and to encourage them to work with support services during the winter months, that is, the period from 1 November to 31 March. Extreme cold is defined as when the Met Office has forecast that the temperature will be at zero or below that for three consecutive nights. Severe weather is defined as when the Met Office issues a red warning for the local area in relation to rain, snow or wind. Local authorities may activate the protocol when there are amber warnings and the Council usually does in these circumstances.

We are therefore committed to providing shelter to rough sleepers during the winter months.

The protocol operates outside of the usual eligibility and entitlement frameworks which govern access to housing. In line with the provisions of it, we are obliged to identify and to target those who are rough sleeping.

If a rough sleeper cannot be persuaded to access accommodation, we must provide them with information about the health risks associated with sleeping out during severe weather. We must also monitor their wellbeing and continue to offer support, provisions and information on services available to assist them. We are also obliged to give consideration to their mental capacity working in partnership with the Police and other services.

Key actions required to deliver this priority:

1. Identify other funding streams to continue this work which has been funded by the Government's rough sleeping initiative should further grant funding not be available in future years
2. Further develop our approach to the provision of night shelter accommodation for rough sleepers during the winter months
3. Continue to work in partnership to improve outcomes for those who are sleeping rough or at risk of it

2 Maximise prevention activities and outcomes

Prevention is effective when it is timely and where possible can be aligned to individual issues. In the past, successful outcomes have often been achieved by the use of a pragmatic and flexible approach.

Officers engage with clients at an early stage and use a range of interventions in order to try to prevent homelessness. We use an alert system so that those agencies which have a Duty to Refer can send information online and social landlords are also able to use this to ensure that those tenants who may be at risk of eviction can be supported appropriately with a view to helping them to sustain their tenancies.

For example, they will engage with landlords, if appropriate, or refer families for mediation in order to prevent youth homelessness.

Partnership working is seen as a key strand of our approach and our Housing Options team works in partnership with a wide range of agencies which work in the District. The Job Centre Plus is based at Phoenix House which means that there is a good working relationship between front line officers in both agencies.

We employ a Youth Homelessness Worker and this is funded in part by Devon County Council. This Officer works with those aged 25 and under and has established good links with a range of partners including the team dedicated to working with young people and care leavers. A key strand of our approach is to refer young people and their families for mediation following a family breakdown.

DCC has a responsibility to take care of those young people under 18 who are homeless and the Council, together with other housing authorities in Devon, has entered into a joint protocol which sets out the obligations of the authority with responsibility for the provision of social services and those of the housing authorities. All cases involving those under 18 who are homeless must be managed in accordance with this protocol and joint needs assessments will be completed with DCC Officers if a young person below 18 approaches the Council.

In addition, the Council is also involved in the Devon Children and Families Partnership and contributes to the Mid/East Devon Locality Partnership which is designed to deliver Early Help to those families to avoid crises. There is a housing support worker based within the Early Help team and our Housing Options Officers will make referrals to this worker, as appropriate, if they feel that a family is at risk of homelessness.

Our Officers work with navigators in local prisons to help those due for release to avoid homelessness. We also work with Bay 6, the hospital discharge scheme at the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital, to support those who may be unable to return to their home due to their health needs or who may be at risk of homelessness following discharge.

The Council funds a service, known as Wiser£money, which is based in Phoenix House and which is designed to provide local welfare assistance to those clients of

the Council experiencing exceptional financial difficulty. Navigate Community Interest Organisation provides this service which is free, confidential and tailored to meet individual needs. There is provision for money and debt advice, help with income maximisation and signposting and referral to other support agencies, as required. The Council has a rolling contract with Navigate which will come to an end in April 2021.

CHAT also provides tenancy support and offers a debt advice service.

We operate a Sanctuary scheme in partnership with the Police to help victims of domestic abuse to remain in their homes. We also work with a range of other agencies to support those victims who have fled as a result of incidents of domestic abuse.

As a stock holding authority, the Council is able to house clients who are homeless into permanent accommodation within our own housing stock. The Voids and Allocations team identifies risk at an early stage and can signpost and/or refer prospective tenants for help and advice which will help them to sustain their tenancies.

The Housing Options team has a good relationship with many local estate agents and will work with them to help clients in the private sector to sustain their tenancies.

We use a deposit and advance rent scheme (for more information about this, please refer to the section below) and this provides clients with more options.

There are other projects in Mid Devon which work with certain groups of clients and the Council endeavours to be responsive to the needs of the partners responsible for running these because they are a useful resource which widens the options open to some of those who are homeless in our District.

The Council actively engages with different partnership groups which operate in the District, at a County level and regionally. These partnerships are important because they increase the exchange of information about best practice. However, they also help Officers to build up links which can prove invaluable with regard to resolving the homelessness of individual households.

Key actions required to deliver this priority:

1. Seek to continue to provide or facilitate support for all households at risk of homelessness and in particular to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation available to all priority households that are unable to find their own solution.
2. Engage with landlords in the District with the aim of:
 - a. Increasing supply
 - b. Putting in place support to help them to help tenants to sustain their tenancies, thereby reducing void periods, tenant damage etc.
3. Continue to actively participate in partnerships on the basis that the Council can benefit from opportunities to undertake joint working initiatives, share best practice and training and from an economy of scale

3 Increasing accommodation options

Facilitating more homes in Mid Devon

The [Social Housing Green Paper: A New Deal for Social Housing](#) published on 14 August 2018, contained a number of core themes, one of which was expanding housing supply and supporting home ownership.

There are several ways in which Councils can improve the opportunities for local people to secure a home which they can afford. The Council has already set up a local housing company and is also using the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to build more homes in support of this objective.

The other ways in which the Council can deliver more affordable housing are:

- To directly commission and to procure a developer to build homes on a council-owned site
- To work in partnership with other registered providers of social housing (RPs), collaborating closely on resources including land, type of development and future management arrangements
- To work with developers who are required by section 106 agreements to make a percentage of homes on all large developments available as affordable housing
- To facilitate community and neighbourhood groups to deliver affordable housing

Therefore, the local authority needs to negotiate with developers, land owners and RPs, and to work in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders in order to enable the delivery of affordable housing across the District. The Council also needs to ensure that there is a consistency of approach with other partners within the Greater Exeter Strategic Partnership.

Housing enabling, that is, actively promoting and maximising the development of affordable housing, is a key strand of the Council's approach to increasing the supply of affordable housing and a priority for our Planning and Housing Services.

The Deposit and Advance Rent Scheme (DARS)

When someone applies for assistance because they are about to become, or are, homeless, the priority for Officers in the Housing Options team is to work to assist the household concerned to remain in their existing home. This may involve negotiating with the landlord and offering mediation, or repayment plans, if they are in rent arrears. In addition, Officers will offer the applicant access to the deposit and advance rent scheme (DARS), if necessary, because this has the potential to enable them to secure alternative accommodation.

The DARS enables Officers to provide an interest free loan, repayable on a monthly basis until the debt is cleared, as an option to those who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness. A loan made using the DARS often provides a cheaper option than placing someone into temporary accommodation. The average DARS loan is around £1200 and this is repayable over five years.

It should be noted that it can be difficult to recover monies owed by clients who may sometimes be very vulnerable and who may be experiencing financial distress for a variety of reasons.

When someone applies for assistance because they are about to become, or are, homeless, the priority for Officers is to work to assist the household concerned to remain in their existing home. This may involve negotiating with the landlord and offering mediation, or repayment plans, if they are in rent arrears. In addition, Officers will offer the applicant access to the deposit and advance rent scheme (DARS), if necessary, because this has the potential to enable them to secure alternative accommodation. However, there is a large amount of unrecovered debt associated with the DARS scheme therefore the scheme will be kept under review. There can be no assumption of its future use or availability as it is a cost pressure.

Disabled facilities grant – Better Care Funding

The delivery of the Disabled Facilities Grant programme is mandatory and a statutory function of the local housing authority. The delivery of this function is governed by the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

In 2015 the government introduced the Better Care Fund (BCF) in an attempt to bring health and social care together in an integrated way. The BCF is a combination of government funding from the Department of Health and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and includes the grant allocation for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs). This funding stream is managed by the Council on behalf of DCC.

In some cases, homelessness can be relieved by the use of grant funding to adapt a home so that it better meets the needs of the client. Therefore, the use of the BCF is an important strand of our approach to prevent homelessness.

Improving the Quality of Homes in the Private Sector in Mid Devon

Our review of the housing market and other issues which impact homelessness in Mid Devon has highlighted the need to improve the supply and quality of private rented accommodation.

Our Public Health Service organises a Landlord Forum which takes place annually and which allows our Officers to engage with those landlords who may not have previously considered working with us to resolve the housing needs of those who are

homeless. In addition, there is a commitment to raise standards so that all those living in private sector accommodation have a home which is decent, safe and warm.

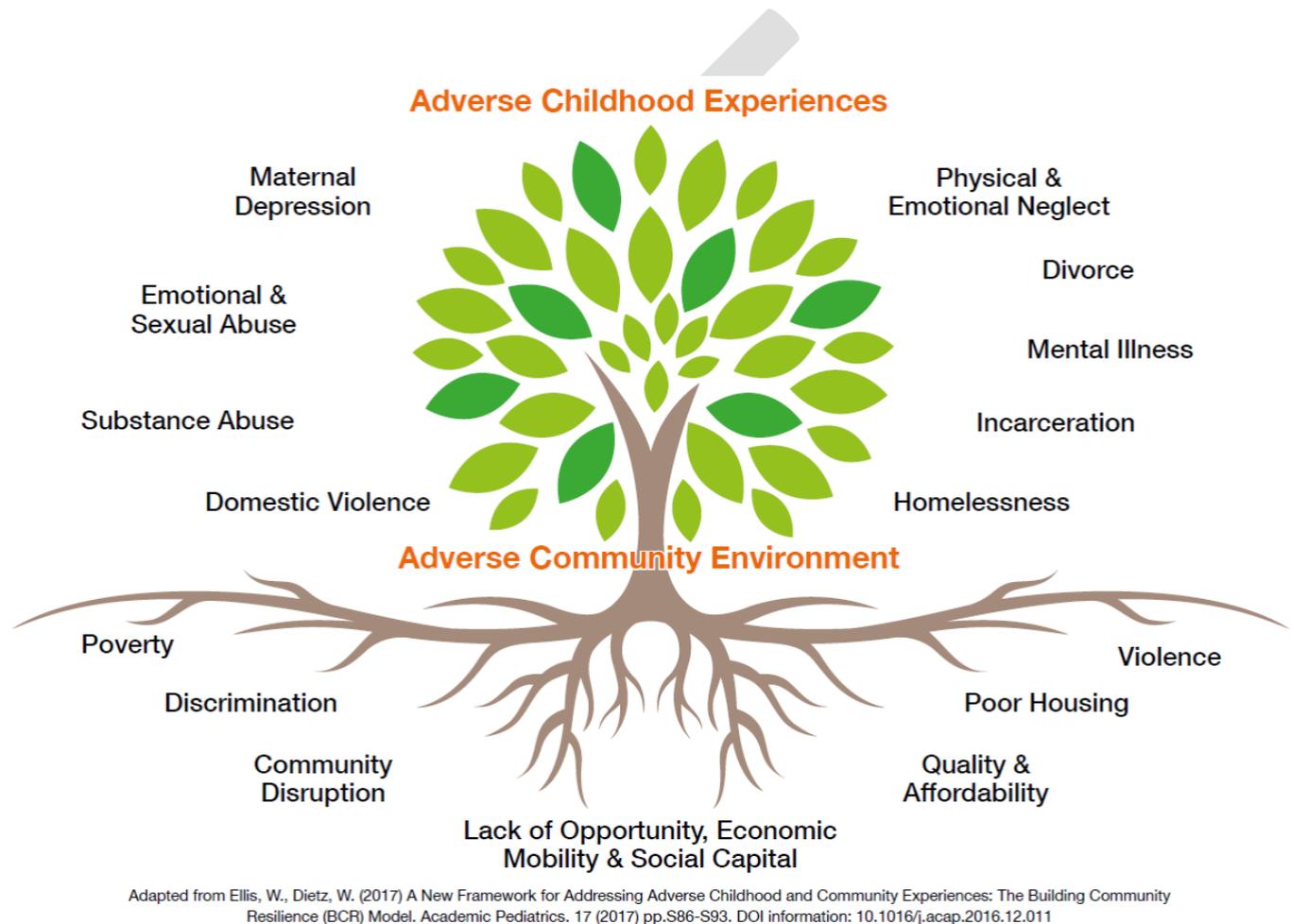
Key actions required to deliver this priority:

1. Work with the Planning Service to support housing enabling activity to deliver more affordable homes in Mid Devon
2. Review procedures relating to DARS to ensure to ensure legislative compliance and to improve the information given to recipients
3. Promote adaptations as a way of relieving potential homelessness
4. Continue to encourage landlords with good quality accommodation to let to work closely with the Council to assist those in housing need
5. Work to improve the quality of private sector housing by continuing to take a robust approach to inspection and enforcement of standards

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4 Improving health and wellbeing

Adverse childhood experiences may impact health in a negative way. It is important that those delivering services designed to prevent and manage homelessness understand the associations between these experiences and negative health outcomes. The risk of homelessness is increased for those who have had adverse childhood experiences and work to identify the risk of this and to mitigate it, is important with regard to delivering improved access to a range of opportunities for clients.



Family breakdown, in particular, is considered to be a key contributor to homelessness and therefore the Council works in partnership with DCC which is responsible for the delivery of Social Services, to resolve any emerging issues as early as possible. Drug and alcohol issues, together with mental health factors, also appear to contribute. Work within the Early Help Locality Partnership, with the Care Leavers team and with other agencies including CHAT and Citizen's Advice support this.

Factors affecting housing sustainment and risk of homelessness include issues relating to social isolation, and a lack of timely interventions particularly around mental health and drug and alcohol services. Further to this, chaotic and transient lifestyles can mean clients struggle to engage with healthcare services. Our outreach workers

are able to establish a link between Housing and Health services in order to deliver the support and advice needed for some clients.

The Council works with a range of partners in the District and across the County in order to find appropriate support for clients with complex needs and will continue to develop pathways designed to resolve issues associated with these.

Key actions required to deliver this priority:

1. Continue to support those at risk of/ or experiencing domestic abuse
2. Work in partnership to support those vulnerable people at risk of homelessness
3. Continue to build relationships with local general practitioners to develop increased understanding and more effective joint working
4. Ensure that services are available for vulnerable people and those at risk of homelessness by making appropriate referrals
5. Raise awareness of issues relating to homelessness and vulnerable people by visiting partner agencies and agreeing protocols for engagement

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Monitoring and reviewing the strategy

Action	Expected Outcome	Target date
Minimising Rough Sleeping		
Succession planning post April 2020 to ensure the continuation of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach work • Housing First pilot • Navigator role 	Have in place a plan for the continuation of work relating to rough sleepers if Government funding is no longer available post 2020	March 2020
Housing First pilot: monitor outcomes during 2019/20	Helping vulnerable people who have or who were at risk of sleeping rough to develop the skills required to sustain a tenancy Build up evidence to demonstrate effectiveness of approach	March 2020
Further develop our approach to the provision of night shelter accommodation for rough sleepers during the winter months	Minimising the risk to anyone who is sleeping rough, building up trust, and assisting them to seek safe and secure accommodation	Ongoing
Partnership arrangements – ensure that data sharing agreements are in place and that cases are audited regularly to ensure that data has been shared appropriately Housing Options Manager to audit all partnership arrangements	Data sharing is undertaken in a lawful manner	March 2020 and yearly thereafter
Maximising prevention activities and outcomes		
Develop stronger relationships with other registered providers (RPs) active in Mid Devon	Increased opportunities for homeless clients to access social housing	Ongoing

Action	Expected Outcome	Target date
Undertake an audit to review partnership arrangements on an annual basis	Identifying areas where needs are not being met and also where there is unnecessary duplication in the supply of services	November 2020 & annually thereafter
Undertake a housing strategy meeting with partners on an annual basis	Identifying pressures, new initiatives and funding streams, and increasing mutual understanding	April 2020 & annually thereafter
Engage with private sector landlords in the District by working with the Benefit team to identify those landlords with the most homes in the District.	Establishing clear referral processes to enable them to access support to help them to help tenants to sustain their tenancies, thereby reducing void periods, tenant damage etc. This should encourage these landlords to continue working in partnership in the Council and this, in turn, can be used, as evidence to show others that working with the Council can be mutually beneficial	March 2021
To offer a Housing Options Prevention Service to all clients/landlords	The introduction of the landlord liaison service ensuring that all landlords can refer to the service for customers at risk of homelessness.	Ongoing
Seek to continue to provide or facilitate support for all households at risk of homelessness This will involve ensuring that all staff are well trained and understand what resources are available to support their clients in Mid Devon. This to include signposting and referring to services which can assist with budgeting, debt and money advice	Building better relationships with support services, mapping services available.	Ongoing
Continue to actively participate in partnerships	The Council can benefit from opportunities to undertake joint working initiatives, share best practice and training; and from an economy of scale	Ongoing

Action	Expected Outcome	Target date
In cases where there has been a family breakdown, refer to mediation, publicising the positive outcomes that can be achieved so that other partner agencies have an awareness and understanding.	An annual publicity campaign which describes the positive outcomes arising from referrals to mediation	Yearly
Engage with other agencies which can offer transitional support to those moving out of temporary accommodation	Improved knowledge of the offer, greater understanding of the role of each and better outcomes for those moving into settled accommodation	Ongoing
Improve public awareness of Housing Options	Improve awareness and public knowledge more generally about local housing shortages and the factors that lead to homelessness so that people are able to be proactive in resolving their housing difficulty	Ongoing
Referrals into the service.	Maintain a high level of awareness about housing options and homelessness amongst partner agencies to ensure early referrals into the service, promoting the web based technologies for private landlords to notify us if they are going to evict their tenant or if the tenant has fallen behind with their rent so that we can intervene early to resolve the issue before it leads to eviction proceedings	Ongoing
Making best use for access to the service	Improving methods for social landlords, social services, refuges, support services to notify us of any housing related difficulties so that we can work to resolve them before the person is asked to leave the home	Ongoing
Early intervention with partners	Early intervention – engage with partners to identify potential housing issues early so that pre-crisis support can be put in	Ongoing

Action	Expected Outcome	Target date
	place. This may include identifying management moves quickly to ensure a proactive planned move and early identification of Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) cases that need intervention	
Maximising Debt Advice	Maximising options for applicants who are i	Ongoing
Increasing accommodation options		
Raise awareness of the service and how it operates	Provide briefings to partner agencies and other groups which may benefit from having a greater understanding and awareness including local schoolchildren	Ongoing
Make best use of Council housing stock to ensure that it is available to those in greatest housing need	Positive action around social housing fraud; campaign to raise awareness. Ensure that all housing management staff are trained to recognise the signs and know what action they should take	Ongoing
Work with Private Landlords to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop schemes to reduce barriers to letting to tenants with a history of debt/ in receipt of welfare To put in place support for them to help them to better sustain tenancies Improve access to good quality housing, increase choices for those who are homeless and give them more options This will involve promoting good news stories and Making private sector landlords aware of the offer from the Council in terms of support to their tenants	Increased supply of private sector accommodation available to vulnerable people in Mid Devon. Increase in reputable Landlords with housing in Mid Devon	Ongoing Ongoing

Action	Expected Outcome	Target date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a promotional campaign and develop a package of incentives to attract Landlords 		
Develop a dedicated contact point and literature for Private Sector Landlords considering serving notice to prevent homelessness/facilitate planned moved	To increase prevention activity within the Private Sector	Ongoing
Develop better relationships providers of temporary accommodation in Mid Devon which will involve routinely liaising with these establishments, promoting good news stories and ensuring that there is a responsive support service available	An increased supply of temporary accommodation for use in crisis situations	Ongoing
Promotion of services including adaptations as a way of relieving potential homelessness	More residents able to remain in their own homes	Ongoing
Work to improve the quality of private sector housing by continuing to take a robust approach to inspection and enforcement of standards by referring issues relating to poor quality homes to the Private Sector Housing team	Improved housing in the private rented sector	Ongoing
Review procedures relating to the use of DARS	Update literature for use with clients which clearly explains their responsibilities	March 2020
Explore the implementation of auto bid	Explore the implementation of auto bid for households who are under a housing duty	March 2020

Action	Expected Outcome	Target date
Ensuring sufficient supply of accommodation	We will aim to keep bed & breakfast usage low by introducing shared houses for single homeless households and making best use of our existing stock. Whilst in temporary accommodation we will continue to work with people to source suitable housing solution, this will not be a stepping stone to social housing.	Ongoing
Joined up neighbouring social landlords working for those fleeing domestic violence	Promote Reciprocal schemes for people fleeing their social tenancies due to violence or risk	
Improving health and wellbeing		
Further development of partnership working arrangements with local GPs and other services available to support good health and wellbeing for homeless clients. This to involve a continuing programme of briefings to ensure that partners have an understanding of homelessness and related issues in Mid Devon and the Council's offer; and potentially the development of more service level agreements.	Increased understanding and better joint working	Ongoing
Publicise help and assistance available to those who may be rough sleeping; and what the general public can do to notify the Council about anyone about whom they are concerned	The Council understands who is sleeping rough in the District and has opportunities to connect with these people and to arrange appropriate support	Ongoing
Continue to support those at risk of/ or experiencing domestic abuse	Helping victims to break the cycle and live without fear	Ongoing

Action	Expected Outcome	Target date
Continue to review monthly statistics for trends	Monitor, review and evaluate data to look at any trends to predict future levels of homelessness	Ongoing
Housing First Project to assist and empower individuals to come off the streets, access mainstream services and reengage with mainstream society	Develop integrated response across health, housing and social care	Ongoing

This action plan will be responsive to change and will be kept under review, updates will be provided to the Homes Policy Development Group on a half-yearly basis.

Publication

A copy of this Strategy is available on the Council's website and is available on request at the Council's offices.

If you would like more information regarding the Preventing Homelessness Strategy, contact Housing Options.

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