

# **Havant Borough Council**

## **Homelessness Review 2018/19**

### **1      Introduction**

**1.1** Local housing authorities have a legal requirement (Homelessness Act 2002) to publish a homelessness strategy and, as part of this process, to carry out a homelessness review to inform and formulate that strategy.

**1.2** The review requires that the local authority assess the current homeless situation within their area, to forecast the likely extent of housing need and homelessness in the future, to identify existing support provision to prevent and relieve homelessness, and to identify any gaps or issues with current services and support provided. The findings of the review should form the basis for the content and actions included in the homelessness strategy. This review is written following the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018 and takes in to account the additional duties introduced by the Act. It also takes account of the guidance set-out in the Government's Rough Sleeper Strategy published in August 2018.

**1.3** It is our aim to take the priorities identified in the review and formulate the future Action Plan.

#### **1.4 National context**

The last few years have seen significant changes which are likely to impact on homelessness:

- Introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which has extended statutory responsibilities for local authorities to provide meaningful support to single people as well as extending prevention & relief duties for all eligible households.
- The overall rate of new housing provision is not keeping pace with household growth and is failing to reduce housing market pressures.
- Welfare reform continues to have an impact on those receiving benefits (lower benefit caps, Universal Credit and freezing of Local Housing Allowance rates).
- Cuts to local government funding including the Supporting People programme
- The full impact of the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union is hard to predict at this time.
- The Localism Act 2011 – shifting power from central government back into the hands of individuals, communities and local authorities.
- The increase in rough sleeping and government's Rough Sleeper Strategy to end rough sleeping.

#### **1.5 Local context**

Havant is a desirable place to live and work; it lies in the South and Eastern part of Hampshire and forms part of the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH). PUSH recognizes the importance of Southampton and Portsmouth as regional growth cities.

There are a number of local key issues that affect the Council. These include:

- An ageing population. Census 2011, population 120684, predictions were that by 2016 this figure would increase to 123700, and by 2023 this would be 129300. Small Area Population Forecasts (SAPF) suggest that between 2016 and 2023 those aged 65-84 will have increased by 2700 (11%), and those aged 85+ will have increased by 1200 (27.2%)
- Outmigration of the workforce. Currently 26602 Havant residents commute outside of the Borough for work, whilst 17685 commute into our area. This gives a net out-commuting level of 8917.
- Property values about 10% above the regional average. According to UK House Price Index average for Havant June 2017 was £266540, compared to national figure of £240325 so 11% more. In addition, the Havant average had increased by 11% from the previous year.
- A deficit in affordable housing supply. The PUSH Objectively Assessed Housing Need Update (GL Hearn 2016) suggests Havant needs **292-368** affordable dwellings per annum. Delivery for the last 3 years were 16/17 **168**, 17/18 **76**, and 18/19 **94**.
- Difficulties in bringing forward housing generally due to poor market conditions. House prices are rising at their slowest rate for seven years as a result of dampened consumer demand due to Brexit uncertainty discouraging buyers and sellers. There has been a general slowdown in UK house price growth over the three years since the EU referendum, driven mainly by a slowdown in the South and East of England. Havant has a variety of substantial new development schemes in the pipeline, all at various stages of the planning process.
- Plan for an additional 6300 new homes between 2006 and 2026 (the timescale for the Core Strategy). Pre-submission Havant Borough Local Plan 2036 (HBLP2016) states that objectively assessed need is now 9260.
- The fact that in Havant as a whole 72% of households are owner occupiers but at Leigh Park only 50% are owner occupiers and of the 50% who are not, most are tenants of Portsmouth Council. Census 2011 figures are: Havant Borough 69% o/occ, 19% LA/HA tenants...less than Hampshire as a whole but more than England as a whole. Our private rented % at 10% is less than both Hampshire and England. In Leigh Park 46% are o/occ, with 32% social rented tenants. PCC has approximately 5000 social homes in our Borough mainly concentrated in Leigh Park, but with smaller numbers in Wecock Farm and Crookhorn.
- The needs of regeneration of parts of the Havant borough. Havant sits in a prosperous part of the South East, however difficult local economic conditions have led to a prolonged lack of investment in Borough renewal. In some areas this has caused further depression of values and resultant deterioration of the quality of our urban spaces and building stock. HBC now wishes to take a more interventionist approach in order to drive investment and halt, then ultimately reverse this decline.

## New Homes

The HBLP2036 at Policy H2 requires 30% affordable housing on sites outside of Havant, Waterlooville, and Leigh Park town centres, and 20% affordable housing within those area centres as defined through Policies KS1, KS2 and KS3.

In addition, there is a substantial requirement to provide sheltered and extra care housing within the borough to meet the needs of our ageing population. This could

be addressed by including a percentage on any of the allocated sites within the HBLP2036 and also by maximising the provision of homes which are easily adaptable and accessible as older persons circumstances change. This will enable extra care to be provided for residents in their own homes.

Developments must provide mixed and balanced communities with a range, type, and size, including affordable housing which reflects the latest evidence of locally identified need. The affordable homes provided should, wherever possible, be on site, should be indistinguishable from the market housing, will be expected to be spread across the site in small clusters and the housing mix should broadly reflect the market housing element. There are key developing Registered Providers operating within the Borough and nomination arrangements exist through Hampshire Home Choice and are included as part of the s106 obligations.

Available waiting list data from Hampshire Home Choice and Help to Buy South suggests there is a greater need for affordable rented homes rather than intermediate affordable homes such as Shared Ownership. In response the Local Plan seeks a tenure split of broadly 70/30% in favour of rented dwellings.

New homes are to be provided predominantly on a number of strategic sites. It is estimated that 6010 new dwellings could be provided within the allocations in the HBLP2016, 1100 on the Southleigh strategic site, and a further 1327 as a result of windfall sites expected between 2024/25 and 2033/36.

Detailed below are average house prices across Hampshire.

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>2017 Average House Price</b>
Basingstoke and Deane	£309,083
East Hampshire	£374,905
Eastleigh	£276,516
Fareham	£286,193
Gosport	£203,235
Hart	£408,549
Havant	£266,540
New Forest	£339,358
Portsmouth	£207,630
Southampton	£205,986
Test Valley	£332,256
Waverley	£467,784
Winchester	£417,976

### Housing Affordability and Tenure

Affordability is a major issue both nationally and locally, particularly for young people looking to enter the housing market. Owner-occupation remains difficult to achieve for many as the average house price in Havant Borough was £266,540 in June 2017; an 11% increase from the average price 12 months previously. This is significantly higher than the national increase of 4.9%. Alongside these increases, local incomes are relatively low at just over £27,500 per annum, being around half of what is needed to afford the average home. Alongside this, house prices are rising faster

than the national average wage<sup>6</sup> which will make housing even less affordable in the future. To compensate for this, a greater range of homes and tenures will need to be provided which embrace specialist and innovative housing products for young people and an ageing population (see sub-section above on population).

### Deprivation, Education and Health

The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) are produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and provide information on deprivation on a range of economic, social and housing issues. In 2015, the Borough had 18 areas within the 20% most deprived areas in England; of these, 6 were in the 10% most deprived. These 18 areas were located in Waterlooville (most notably Wecock Farm) and Leigh Park; with one exception in west Hayling. In contrast, some of the least deprived areas in the country also exist in Havant Borough, i.e. Emsworth. As a result, a renewed effort is needed to provide opportunities and regeneration in the most deprived parts of the Borough.

Overall, in 2015, Havant Borough was ranked 142nd out of the 326 local authorities in England in terms of deprivation<sup>7</sup>. This was an improvement from 107th in 2010. 2.29 In terms of education, skills and training more specifically however,

Havant Borough was ranked as 73rd out of 3268 and is therefore within the most deprived 25% of local authorities in England in terms of this indicator. Nevertheless, this ranking can be attributed to high variations in education, skills and training at ward level throughout Havant Borough. Warren Park, Battins and Bondfields (all within Leigh Park, see Chapter 6) are all within the 10% most deprived wards in England with respect to average education , skills and training; however, Hayling West, St Faith's, Purbrook, Waterloo, Emsworth and Cowplain are all within the least deprived half of English wards (the latter two are even within the least deprived third).

Health is a key indicator of how deprived an area is. Although life expectancy for men and women at a Borough-level is similar to the England average; life expectancy is 10.5 and 7.8 years lower for men and women respectively in the most deprived areas of the Borough when compared to the least deprived areas.

Around one third of the Borough's adults were deemed obese in 2012 and almost a fifth of Year 6 children were classified as obese in 2016. Public Health England has produced a Health Profile for Havant Borough which shows that Havant is significantly worse in 2016 than the England average in respect of:

- ♣ Children from low income families;
- ♣ GCSEs achieved;
- ♣ Violent crime;
- ♣ Smoking status at time of delivery of a baby;
- ♣ Excess weight in adults;
- ♣ Hospital stays for self-harm, and;

♣ Recorded diabetes.

Contrary to this, self-defined general health in the Borough was collected through the 2011 census and it was reported that 44% of the population chose to describe themselves as being in “very good health”. In contrast, only 1.3% saw themselves as having “very bad health”<sup>9</sup>. 2.33 In terms of economic inactivity as a result of long-term sickness and disability, Havant experiences a similar rate to the English average, albeit almost double the Hampshire average.

## 1.6 Defining homelessness

Homelessness can take many forms:

- **Rough sleeping:** this is the most visible form of homelessness and includes people bedding down on the streets or sleeping on public transport etc. Its causes are complex and
- **Statutory homelessness:** this is where people or households have approached the local authority as they are either threatened with homelessness or are actually homeless.
- **Hidden homeless:** these people and households are generally not included in official statistics as they may be staying with friends and family on a temporary basis, sleeping on their sofa for example. They may also be living in housing which should not be occupied for health and safety reasons.

## 1.7 The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017 fundamentally changed councils’ legal duties towards homeless households, which are summarised below:

**A duty to provide free advisory services** to anyone in the local area about a range of things, such as preventing homelessness and securing accommodation when homeless. These services should be designed to meet the needs of people using them. (HRA 2017)

Certain public bodies, which includes social services authorities, have a **duty to refer** any users of their services who may be homeless or threatened with homelessness to the relevant service within the council. (HRA 2017)

**A duty to assess homeless applications and agree a personal housing plan** with anyone that is eligible and homeless or threatened with homelessness. The plan should set out the actions both the applicant and the council will take, to help address their homelessness. (HRA 2017)

**A duty to prevent homelessness** when someone is threatened with it within 56 days. This applies to anyone who is eligible for assistance, regardless of whether they have a ‘priority need’ (see below for more information on priority need), found to be intentionally homeless or has a local connection to the area. The duty usually

continues for 56 days, unless it is brought to an end by suitable accommodation becoming available for the person or household or they actually become homeless. (HRA 2017)

**A duty to relieve homelessness** when it could not be prevented, through the local authority taking reasonable steps to help an applicant secure suitable accommodation. This duty lasts for 56 days and it can generally only be brought to an end during this period if suitable accommodation is found which is available for at least six months. It applies to anyone with a local connection which is defined in law. If the local authority has reason to believe a homeless applicant may be eligible for assistance and they also have a ‘priority need’, then they must be offered interim or temporary accommodation at this stage. (HRA 2017, Housing Act 1996)

**A duty to provide housing** if homelessness could not be successfully prevented or relieved. This is known as the ‘main housing duty’ and is only owed to applicants who are eligible, have a ‘priority need’ for accommodation and are not homeless intentionally. Only certain people are considered to be in ‘priority need’, such as those who are pregnant, have children or are vulnerable in some way, such as because they are elderly, have a mental or physical illness or disability, have been in prison or care, are a young person or have become homeless due to domestic abuse. This duty is generally only brought to an end by the offer of a ‘suitable’ home, which is defined as social rented housing provided by a council or a registered provider for 4

All of the increased duties detailed above have been incorporated within new processes and all members of the team have been fully trained and will continually be kept up to date with legislation changes and case law.

## **1.8 Related strategies and policies**

There are also a number of strategies and policies that are closely related to the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. These documents are reviewed and renewed to ensure they remain up-to-date and relevant. These include:

- Affordable Housing Statement (see Appendix 1)
- Hampshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Allocation Framework
- Provision of Temporary Accommodation Policy
- Discharge of duty into Private Rented Sector Policy
- Severe Weather Emergency Protocol

## **2.0 Havant Borough Council’s Housing Services provision**

### **2.1 Services provided**

Havant Borough Council’s Housing Services comprises two teams – Housing Options and Advice and Housing Development which are both based in The Plaza in Havant. The Housing Options and Advice team provide housing advice and assistance to anyone who requires it free of charge. This can be to someone with an

issue with their housing situation, or a provider who has an issue with an occupant of their accommodation. Advice is not restricted by tenure and anyone, whether living at home with family/friends, in a private or social rented property or owner occupiers, are equally as entitled to seek assistance.

The team also has a statutory responsibility to process homelessness applications and to determine what duties are owed with assisting those at risk of losing their homes. In all cases, prevention is the preferred outcome, but where not possible, identifying alternative accommodation is the next step, and in some cases, the provision of temporary accommodation until a settled housing solution can be reached.

The local housing authority also has a statutory responsibility to maintain a housing register which it does by processing applications for social housing through assessing a household's housing needs to determine what priority should be awarded when allocating accommodation.

The Council is a non-stock holding authority so works in partnership with its registered social landlords who manage the social housing within their borough to assist with the allocation of accommodation through Hampshire Home Choice, the sub-regional choice based lettings scheme.

In addition to the housing options and advice provisions, the Housing Service is also responsible for ensuring the adequate provision of housing development within the borough through its housing enabling and housing strategy roles. This it does in close partnership with its planners, housing developers and registered providers. See Appendix 1 Affordable Housing Statement for more information.

## **2.2 Access to Housing Services**

Housing options and advice can be accessed during office opening times Monday – Thursday 9.00am to 5.00pm and Friday 9.00am to 4.30pm either in person at The Plaza where a drop-in service is operated, through email at [housingservices2@havant.gov.uk](mailto:housingservices2@havant.gov.uk), or by telephone on 023 9244 6379.

The Council is also obliged to ensure that an emergency service is provided outside of office hours which it does in partnership with East Hants District Council. Officer's man a duty telephone line where enquiries are taken by referral from the Council's Emergency Out of Hours Service, which can be reached on 07850 358156.

## **2.3 Structure**

The Housing Options and Advice team is comprised of 18 full and part-time staff managed by two housing managers, one leading on options and advice and line managing Housing Advisory Officers, the other leading on housing development and strategy and line managing Housing Support Officers.

The teams provide a front-line service split between 5 full time equivalent Housing Advice Officers who take responsibility for processing and managing homelessness

applications and 7.8 full time equivalent Housing Support Officers who work on a generic basis dealing with housing enquiries, processing housing register applications and allocation of social housing and homelessness prevention.

Officers also take lead roles in representing the service in statutory and partnership working such as attendance at the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangement (MAPPA) and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meetings, and attendance at the Early Help Hub, Child Protection and Children in Need planning conferences.

## **2.4 Visitor numbers to the Housing Service**

The Plaza location is popular and easy to access. Visitor numbers to the Plaza's housing reception desk average 66 a week. Of these there are typically 35 queries regarding Hampshire Home Choice, 13 homeless presentations and 18 other housing related <sup>1</sup>queries that can often be related to the threat of homelessness.

Data monitoring shows an upward trend in footfall over the period March to November 2018, which would fall in line with the expected increase in approaches following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which was implemented in April 2018. And whilst these levels have not dropped in the subsequent period from December 2018 to August 2019, the level of housing advice enquiries appears to be rising as the reason for approach.

As well as the services provided by Housing Services, customers can also seek assistance from organisations such as Two Saints, Richmond Fellowship and Havant Citizens Advice who provide housing related support drop ins at the Plaza.

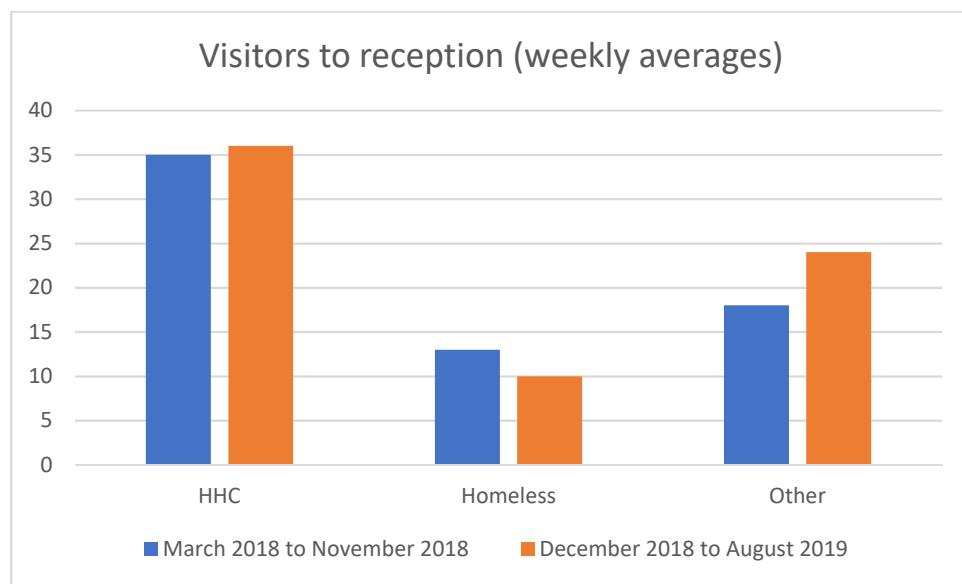
Customers can also seek other housing related advice such as with their housing benefit and discretionary housing payments claims and Council tax support requests, all of which are also provided out of the Plaza.

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<sup>1</sup> Queries recorded as other include triage advice about housing, early intervention work to prevent homelessness and signposting to other support services

**Graph 1**

Number of Visitors to Housing Reception at the Plaza (weekly average)

**3.0 Identifying current and future levels of homelessness.****3.1 Current levels of homelessness in the Havant borough.****Table 1**

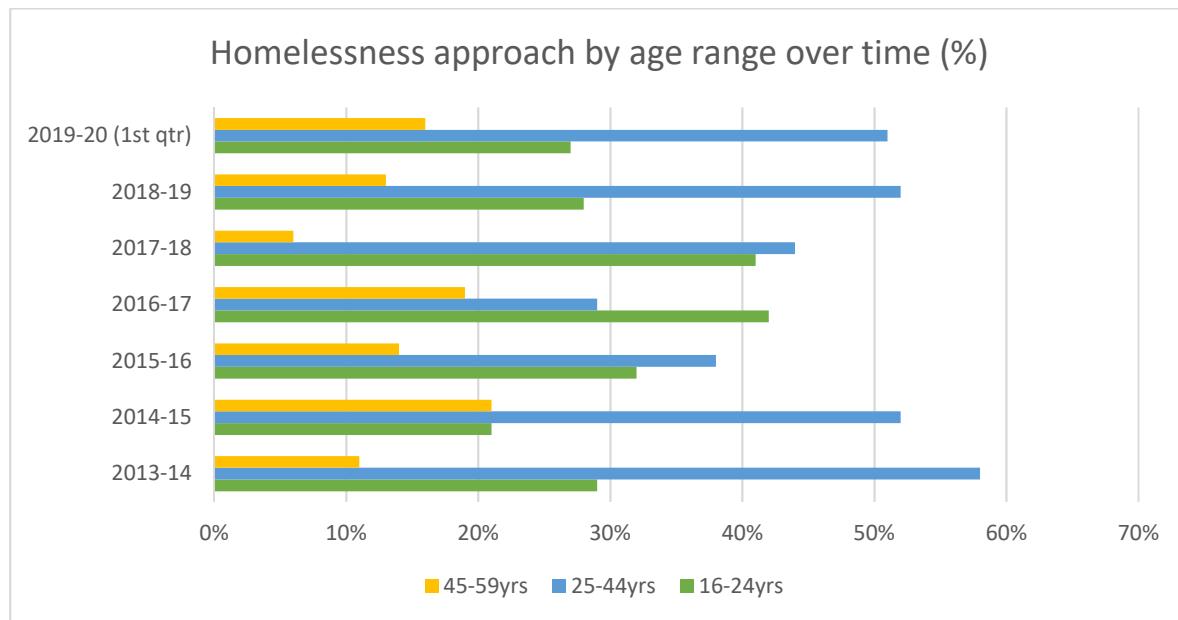
Overall number of homelessness applications opened

<b>No of approaches for advice and assistance (homelessness enquiries)</b>						
<b>2013-14</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20 (1<sup>st</sup> qtr)</b>
940	951	762	923	691	966	287

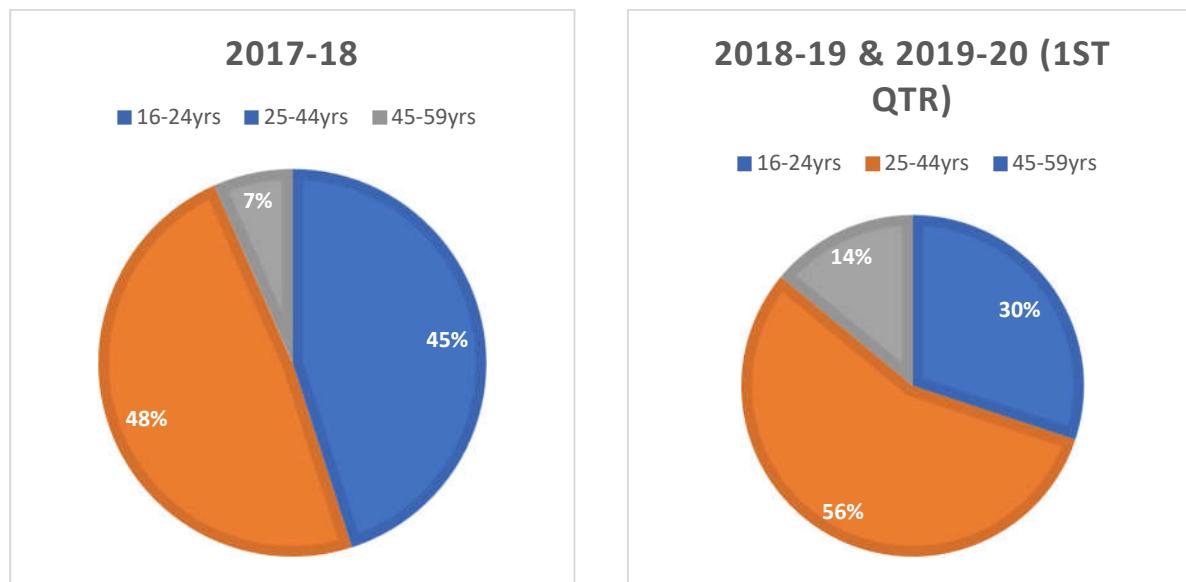
**Table 2**

Homelessness applications – by age range

<b>Profile of main applicant approaching as homeless (top 3)</b>							
	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20 (1<sup>st</sup> qtr)</b>
<b>Age range</b>							
16-24 yrs	29%	21%	32%	42%	41%	28%	27%
25-44 yrs	58%	52%	38%	29%	44%	52%	51%
45-59 yrs	11%	21%	14%	19%	6%	13%	16%

**Graph 2**

The figures for Table/Graph show a significant increase in the numbers of 16-24 year olds presenting as homeless from 2013 – 2018, which levels off in the following years with the increase then being seen in the 25-44 year olds.

**Graph 3**

In 2017-18, 44% of those who made a homelessness approach were between the age ranges of 25-44 years. 16-24 year olds represented 41% of the total. This could be largely due to the welfare benefit restrictions placed upon younger people when looking for accommodation, particularly under 35 year olds who are limited to rooms in shared houses due to only being entitled to the Single Accommodation Rate of

support. With the lack of such accommodation which is suitable and affordable within the borough, this impacts on their ability to resolve their housing needs.

There is also a lack of housing for 16-25 year olds within the borough that provides any form of support to nurture independent living skills such as that which a supported lodgings or a foyer could provide.

In the following years the number of approaches from younger households dropped with a swing towards the 25-44 year age group.

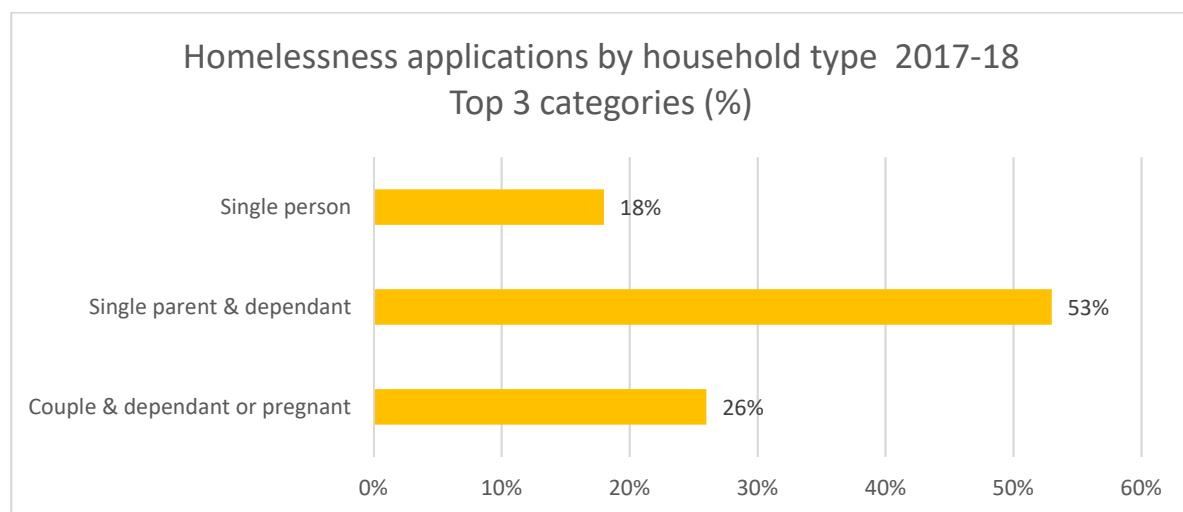
***The following comparison information can only be provided up to 2018 due to the implementation of the HRA and the accompanying statistical information that can be gleaned from the data collected.***

**Table 3**

Homelessness applications - by household type

<b>Household make-up (top 3)</b>					
	<b>2013-14 (38)</b>	<b>2014-15 (33)</b>	<b>2015-16 (37)</b>	<b>2016-17 (31)</b>	<b>2017-18 (34)</b>
Couple & child/ren or pregnant	26%	33%	32%	16%	26%
Single parent & child/ren	45%	36%	35%	61%	53%
Single person	26%	18%	24%	16%	18%

**Graph 4**

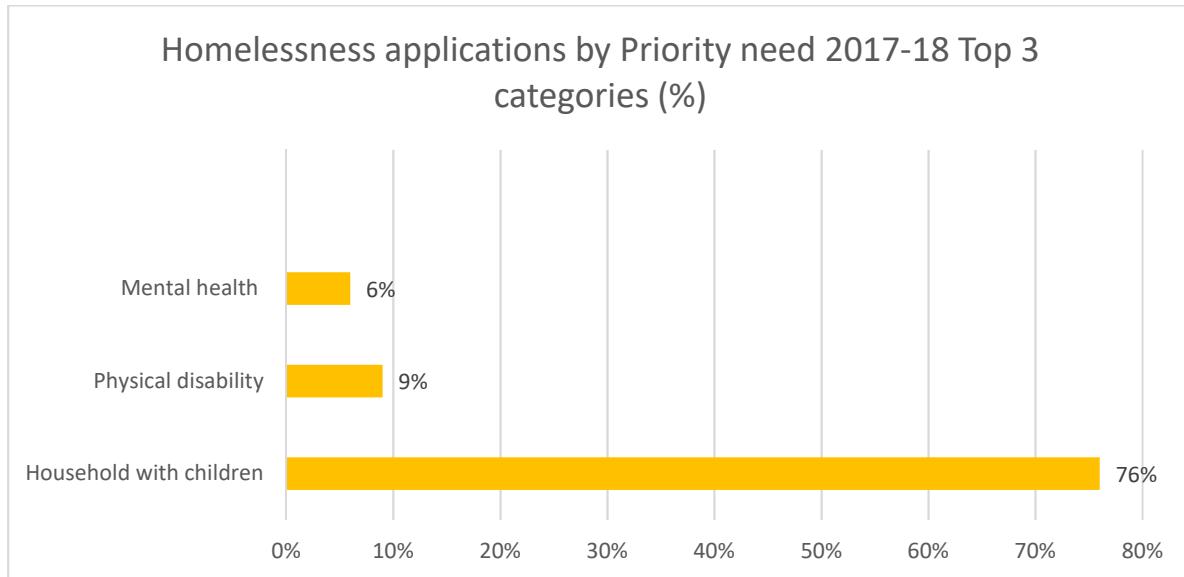


The predominant household type has consistently remained the single parent with dependent children. With parental evictions and breakdown of relationships as the reason for homelessness also remaining consistent, it follows that this would be so.

**Table 4**

Homelessness applications – by priority

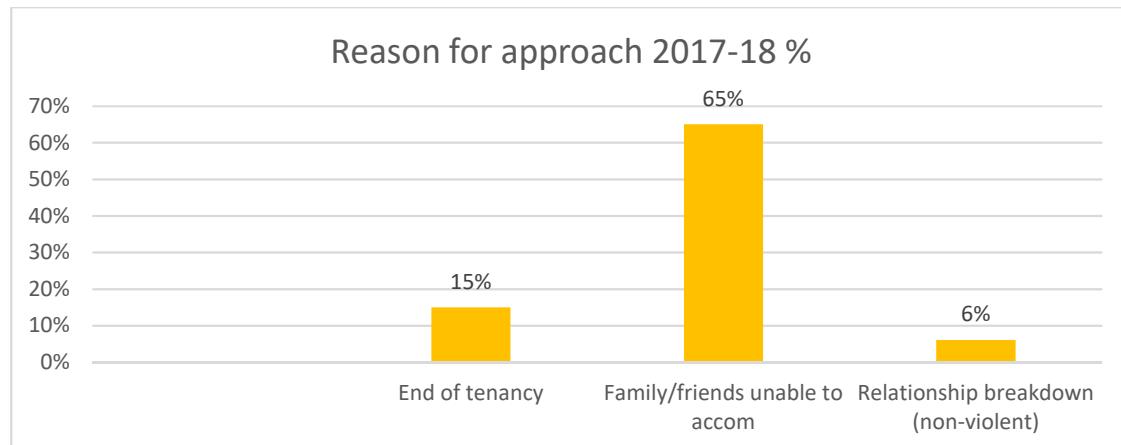
<b>Priority need (top 3)</b>		<b>2013-14 (38)</b>	<b>2014-15 (33)</b>	<b>2015-16 (37)</b>	<b>2016-17 (31)</b>	<b>2017-18 (34)</b>
Household with children	68%	70%	65%	84%	76%	
Physical disability	5%	9%	8%	3%	9%	
Mental health	13%	6%	-	-	6%	
Old age	-	-	14%	10%	-	

**Graph 5**

Households with children make up the largest group of households deemed in priority need. This pattern has not altered significantly over time.

**Table 5****Reason for Approach**

<b>Reason for approach (top 3)</b>					
	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>
End of AST	24%	-	24%	35%	15%
Family/friends unable to accom	24%	30%	35%	42%	65%
Relationship breakdown (violent)	16%	15%	-	-	-
Relationship breakdown (non-violent)	-	-	-	10%	6%
Rent arrears	-	-	11%	-	-
Mortgage difficulties	-	15%	-	-	-

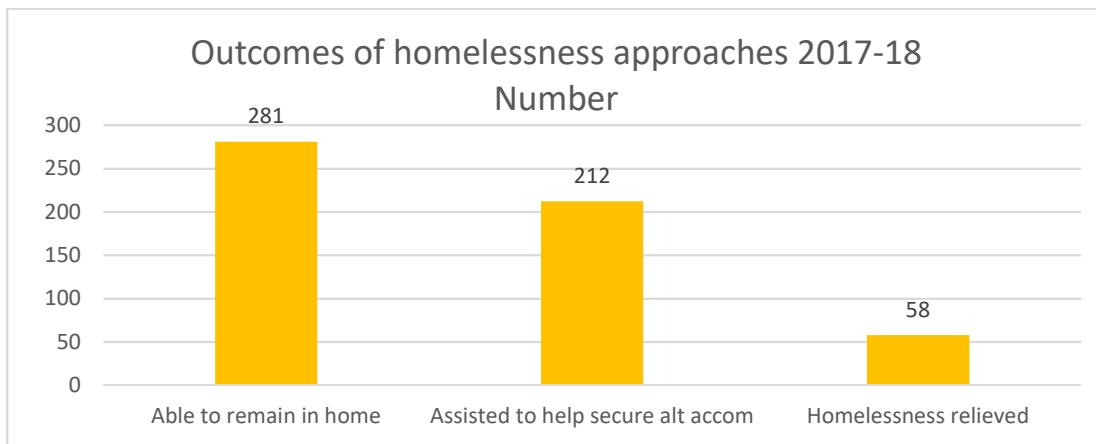
**Graph 6**

In 2017-18, exclusions from family or friends accounted for 65% of the homeless approaches made to the Housing service. This reflects an increasing pattern year-on-year and also mirrors the national picture of the top reason for homelessness.

**Table 6**

Outcomes:

<b><i>Homelessness prevented / relieved</i></b>					
	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>
Able to remain in home	505	462	322	373	281
Assisted to secure alt accom	221	241	233	281	212
Homelessness relieved	60	70	69	91	58
Total	786	773	624	745	551

**Graph 7**

The data shows a significant decrease in the number of cases where households were able to remain in their home. The introduction of welfare reforms and the freezing of the rates of housing benefit entitlement against the increases in market rents over the past few years has left an unaffordable gap for many households when trying to meet their housing costs. This could be a significant factor in the number of incidences of homelessness being prevented by enabling a household to remain in their home in more recent years.

The number of household helped to secure alternative accommodation has remained largely static, although this is also beginning to drop because of the reasons mentioned above. With the lack of social housing also being a factor, finding suitable accommodation for households to move to is proving more difficult.

**Homelessness – April 2018 onwards**

Since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act – the way we report on homelessness has changed to reflect the change in the legislation.

The following table reflects the current reporting outcomes for homelessness application approaches:

**Table 7**

<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20 (1st qtr)</b>
Advice only/Early closure	321	89
Cancelled	3	0
Ineligible	3	0
Main duty accepted	4	1
Main duty discharged	19	2
No duty	20	8
Prevented	295	52
Assisted through Discretionary Housing Payment	221	89
Reasonable assistance duty accepted	0	1
Reasonable assistance duty discharged	4	0
Relieved	50	11
Triage	0	3
Under intervention	0	1
Under prevention	24	27
Under relief	2	3
Total	966	287

**Table 8****Homelessness acceptances**

2013 - 2014	38
2014 - 2015	32
2015 - 2016	37
2016 - 2017	31
2017 - 2018	34
2018 - 2019	23
2019 - 2020	3 (1 <sup>st</sup> quarter)

**Table 8**

Temporary accommodation and emergency housing (in brackets are the number of weeks spent in B&B)

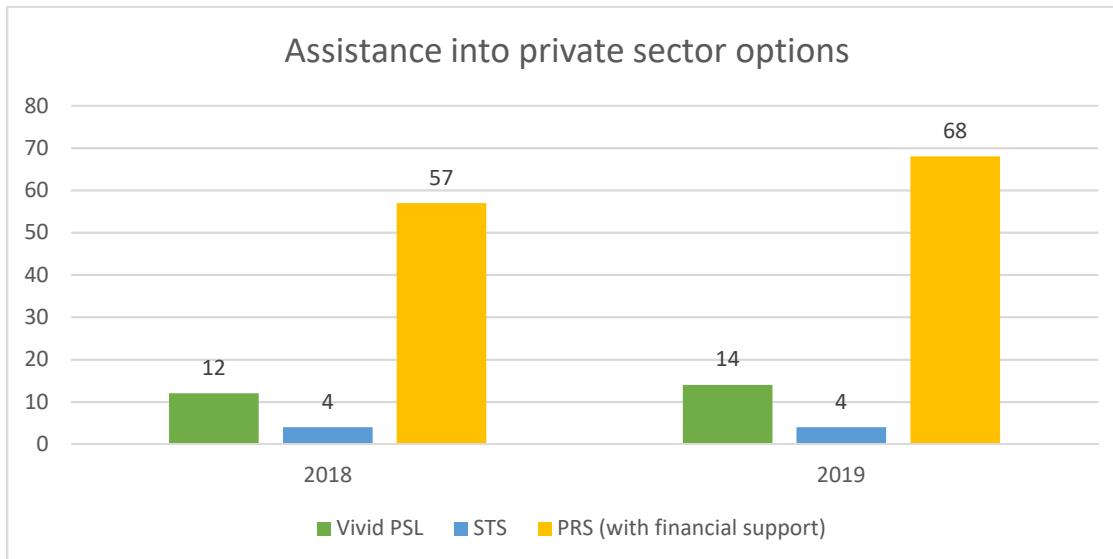
<b>Numbers of households accommodated in temp accom (B&amp;B)</b>						
<b>2013-14</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20 (1<sup>st</sup> qtr)</b>

46	65	71 (215)	50 (214)	59 (228)	78 (307)	27
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Aside from a dip in 2016-17, there has been a year-on-year rise in the number of households requiring placement into emergency temporary accommodation (B&B) as a result of a homelessness application. The projection for 2019-20 shows a marked increase of 83% from 2017-2018. This is largely due to the difficulties for households accessing alternative accommodation in the private sector for the reasons mentioned previously, the waiting times to be considered for social housing and the lack of development in the social housing sector.

In order to reduce the number of households having to be placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation the Council continues to work with its partners in the private and social rented sectors to identify additional resources for the provision of either medium or long-term housing. The Council has also commissioned the provision of bespoke housing related support and can provide financial support to help those currently in Bed and Breakfast to assist to move on to more suitable accommodation as soon as possible. Further measures being considered include the utilisation of affordable housing contributions to identify innovative housing solutions; the consideration of agreements in local lettings plans to allocate a proportion of properties to homeless households and a review of the Allocations Framework to ensure homeless households are effectively represented.

### Graph 8



Wherever possible the council will endeavour to prevent homelessness to avoid a household having to be placed in to emergency accommodation. One of the options available to reduce homelessness includes households being assisted to access private rented sector (PRS) accommodation with the help of financial assistance from the council to secure the accommodation.

The council also has access to longer term private rented sector accommodation through its Supported Tenancy Scheme (STS) and via nominations through a

partnership agreement with Vivid Homes who operate a private leasing scheme (PSL).

### **3.2 Future levels of housing needs**

Whilst single parents with dependent children remain the main type of household approaching for assistance, we are seeing an increase in younger people with a housing need.

We therefore need to establish why this is, whether due to financial constraints young people are unable to remain in the family home for as long needed, or whether because of their lack of independent living skills they are unable to sustain accommodation once leaving home.

There is also an increase in households having to utilise temporary accommodation until a more suitable housing solution can be reached, with a lack of such available in either the private or social housing sectors.

We therefore need to work with our partners in both housing sectors to develop and maximise the resources available to provide housing for those who need it. And given the increase in younger people approaching, this also needs to include accommodation suitable for this cohort, whether it be supported housing, or accommodation that will comply with the single accommodation rate of affordability.

It is also expected that the number of households recorded as homeless or threatened with homelessness will show a marked increase from previous years because of the new duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which places a wider responsibility on local authorities to assess homelessness at an earlier stage than previous to the implementation of the legislation and to assess and assist more households than it previously had a duty to.

This coupled with the new Duty to Refer placed on Public Bodies with effect from 1 October 2018 should also see an increase on the numbers of households approaching as homeless.

## **4 Rough Sleeping**

Every Autumn, local authorities are required to conduct an annual survey of the number of people sleeping rough in their area. Typically, this involves a snapshot survey where a count is carried out on a given date and/or a collection of data obtained from services working in the local area of known rough sleepers is collated (known as an estimate).

The local authority cannot carry out this requirement in isolation. It relies on its partner agencies, community and voluntary organisations to provide the intelligence to feed into the annual rough sleeper return.

**Table 9a Rough Sleeper Counts/Estimates 2018 for the County**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Rough Sleeping numbers</b>
East Hampshire	4

Havant	5
Basingstoke & Deane	8
Rushmoor	8
Hart	0
Fareham	19
Gosport	0
Test Valley	9
Eastleigh	0
New Forest	8
Winchester	8

In order to keep the data clean and not have individuals who could cross boroughs and be counted twice, the local authorities in Hampshire have agreed to conduct their surveys on the same night. This is co-ordinated through the Hampshire Homelessness Group.

This is however, only a survey of rough sleeping. We know there is a considerable amount of sofa surfing and individuals relying on fragile accommodation resources to keep them from rough sleeping.

More work needs to be done to understand the levels of sofa surfing within the borough not only to reflect the true picture of need, but also to be able to understand the level of preventative work that needs to be undertaken to ensure individuals do not slip in to rough sleeping.

### Table 9b

Rough Sleeper Figures for Havant (from annual Autumn rough sleeper count/estimate)

<b>Rough Sleeper figures</b>				
<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>
3	10	8	10	5

The recorded numbers of rough sleepers taken during previous surveys have largely remained stable. Havant, unlike its neighbouring borough Portsmouth, is not a large city which can attract rough sleeping and does not see the level of street begging like larger districts. Nevertheless, there are pockets of rough sleeping activity which, whilst small in comparison to other districts, are still a cause for concern, particularly with the lack of suitable accommodation such as stage 1 supported housing or night shelter facilities available in the borough to provide much needed shelter.

For people who are homeless and without entitlement or access to housing, the provision of Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) is their only chance to escape severe weather. Havant Borough Council triggers SWEP during short periods of high risk weather. The minimum trigger is a forecast of three nights below freezing, so that people sleeping rough have a bed out of harm's way. While it should not be the only response to rough sleeping, SWEP is vital to prevent harm

and death. This is the only type of provision that is open to all, including people with no recourse to public funds and those who have been excluded from other services. HBC has been very flexible in respect of the weather criteria and have extended it in times of extreme wet and windy weather too.

The Council has been successful in obtaining funding from the Government's £11m Rough Sleeper Initiative which has been utilised to have a dedicated outreach worker in place to work with rough sleepers to enable them to engage with services, so they may end their rough sleeping and also to co-ordinate the services available in order to focus the resources on assisting rough sleepers into support and housing rather than facilitating a continued rough sleeping lifestyle.

## **5 Demand for social housing and affordable housing**

Current housing need is high with 1697 households registered on Hampshire Home Choice (HHC) (the housing register) in Havant at July 2019. In 2017/18, with 1753 households on the Housing Register at the end of the year, 228 households secured accommodation through Hampshire Home Choice, whilst in 2018/19 with 1603 households on the Housing Register at the end of the year, 271 households secured accommodation, the increase in allocations largely due to a number of new developments bringing forward additional units.

However, as can be seen in Table 9, there has been a drop in the numbers of households registered for social housing in the borough which is largely due to the changes brought about with the introduction of the Localism Act 2011. The Act allowed local authorities to review their allocations policies to ensure that local needs were being met. The Council also took the opportunity to remove Band 5 from the housing register as applicants in this band had no assessed need to be housed and was not therefore a true reflection of housing need in the area.

At the same time of reviewing the HHC scheme, a renewal process of all applications was carried out. This ensured that all applicants re-joining the revised scheme were up to date and accurate. This process often leads to a drop in applications as people's circumstances change and they no longer require to remain on the list for social housing. Housing Services has continued to renew applications consistently since this initial renewal process ensuring that the housing register is a true reflection of the demand for social sector accommodation in the area.

**Table 10**

Number of households on Hampshire Home Choice

<b>Numbers on Hampshire Home Choice housing register for HBC area (as at end of March in year)</b>					
<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
2548	2803	2003	1753	1782	1603

The wait for social housing remain high with current average waiting times for 1-bedroom accommodation at 6 years and for 2-bedroom and 3-bedroom accommodation at 5 years.

However, applicants can obtain feedback information on recent social housing lets through the Hampshire Home Choice website so that they may see where the demand for accommodation lies and adjust their bidding strategy accordingly to improve their prospects of rehousing through the scheme.

**Table 11**

Number of allocations of housing through Hampshire Home Choice

<b>Numbers of allocations through Hampshire Home Choice for HBC area (as at end of March in year)</b>					
<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
248	362	355	339	228	271

**Table 12**

Average waiting times for applicants housed in Havant between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019

	<b>Band 2</b>	<b>Band 3</b>	<b>Band 4</b>
<b>1 bed</b>	1 year 4 months	2 years 3 months	N/A
<b>2 bed flat</b>	1 year 2 months	3 years 3 months	N/A
<b>2 bed house</b>	10 months	5 years 6 months	N/A
<b>3 bed</b>	10 months	5 years 1 month	N/A
<b>4+ bed</b>	N/A	3 years 7 months	N/A
<b>55+ properties</b>	1 year 3 months	2 years 9 months	N/A

**Table 13**

<b>Numbers of units of new affordable housing completions (as at end of March in each year)</b>						
<b>Tenure</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Shared equity	2	0	0	0	0	0
Discounted market Sale	0	6	0	0	0	0
Social Rent	2	0	3	2	0	0
Affordable Rent	49	159	83	92	53	67
Intermediate Rented	0	0	1	19	5	0
Rent to Buy	0	0	0	16	1	12
Shared Ownership	20	61	64	39	17	15
First Buy	16	0	0	0	0	0
Mortgage Rescue	0	2	0	0	0	0
Total for each year	89	228	151	168	76	94

The higher figures of the level of numbers of allocations through Hampshire Home Choice shown in Table 10 for years 2015-2017 are largely due to where there are periods of development of new units of accommodation, as is mirrored in Table 11. In comparison, years 2014 and 2018 saw very little development and therefore the number of allocations shown are mainly down to re-lets.

If allocations circa 200+ a year is to be the norm with respect to re-lets, then it is clear that the number of allocations versus the numbers of applicants on the housing register is disproportionate and the increased development of affordable housing is therefore crucial if the need for social housing is to be met.

## **6 Affordability of housing in the borough**

The main housing options to those who are homeless or facing homelessness are in either the social or private housing sectors, low cost home ownership often being out of their reach as many households are on low incomes or benefit reliant.

With social housing only being a long-term aspiration for many, this further reduces the options available for a medium-term solution to the private rented sector only.

It is recognised that there is great disparity between the levels of rents being charged for private rented accommodation and the financial assistance that benefit dependent or low-income households can receive for helping them to secure and maintain this type of accommodation as the following two Tables 11 and 12 shows.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates are meant to cover the cheapest 30 per cent of homes in any given area. But they haven't been increased in line with local rents since April 2013 and they remain frozen until April 2020. As a result, renters are facing gaps between the support they can receive, and the rent being asked. Rates have fallen so far behind even the cheapest private rents have become unaffordable for most low-income tenants – putting them at risk of homelessness as they are forced to choose between basic living expenses and paying the shortfall.

This coupled with the fact that LHA will only cover a rent up to a four-bedroom rate, those households who require a five-bedroom property or more are unable to afford such accommodation at all.

**Table 14**

<b>Local Housing Allowances (LHA) rates – PO7, PO8, PO9, PO11 areas</b>		
<b>Bedroom Size</b>	<b>Weekly charge (£)</b>	<b>Per calendar month (£)</b>
Single room rate	69.04	299.17
1	116.53	504.96
2	144.36	625.56
3	173.06	749.93
4	240.00	1040.00

**Local Housing Allowances (LHA) rates – PO10 area**

<b>Bedroom Size</b>	<b>Weekly charge (£)</b>	<b>Per calendar month (£)</b>
Single room rate	73.58	318.85
1	134.02	580.75
2	168.00	728.00
3	198.11	858.48
4	268.03	1161.46

**Table 15**

<b>Advertised rent levels (across all postcodes)</b>		
<b>Bedroom size</b>	<b>Average weekly rent (£)</b>	<b>Average rent per calendar month (£)</b>
Single room rate	120.00	520.00
1	143.37	621.25
2	191.08	828.03
3	277.91	987.63
4	318.00	1378.00

Source: rightmove 28.02.2019

## **7      The Homelessness Partnership Forum**

To help feed into the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the districts homelessness review, workshops and meetings were held. Representatives from partner organisations both statutory, community and voluntary, were invited to attend the anyone unable to attend was invited to provide information regarding the support they provide in order to feed into the review. A list of organisations invited to attend the workshops/meetings or take place in subsequent consultation can be found at Appendix 2.

As part of local authority shared services, the partnership forum included representatives from a wide range of public, private, community and voluntary organisations working across both Havant Borough Council and East Hampshire District Council areas. The workshop sought to map out the existing support and service provision that contributes to the prevention and relief of homelessness across the two authorities. The forum also sought to identify issues which hampered support to those who were homeless or threatened with homelessness and consider ways in which these could be overcome or be improved.

The outcome of this process enabled us to identify the areas of work which needed to be included in the strategy's action plan. It is also envisaged that the action plan will remain in the ownership of not just the Council, but also this Homelessness Partnership Forum who will continue to meet to discuss and develop ways in which to reduce homelessness within the borough and provide the most appropriate services to those in need.

The ethos of the Homelessness Reduction Act is that 'homelessness prevention is everyone's business' which is particularly reflected in the Duty to Refer where public bodies are expected to identify within their service those users who may be homeless or threatened with homelessness and refer to housing services for advice and assistance as early as possible.

The Homelessness Reduction Act also places a more holistic approach to an individual's housing needs, not only to identify why they are homeless, but also what support needs they may have that need addressing which could prevent them becoming homeless now or in the future. There is therefore an even more imperative need for services to work under a multi-agency approach as Housing Services cannot meet all the complex needs of individuals in isolation.

The questions put to the attendees included:

***Q1) What arrangements/resources does your organisation have in place to support the homeless/those threatened with homelessness?***

***Q2) What barriers/issues have you encountered when trying to support homeless households?***

***Q3) What more needs to be done to overcome these barriers?***

## **7.1 Q1) Existing Resources in place to support homeless/those threatened with homelessness**

The following sections provide an outline of the available support in the local area provided by those who gave feedback to the homelessness partnership forum.

### **7.1.1 Housing advice services**

Havant Borough Council's Housing Services provides a wide-range of advice and support as part of its statutory role including general all-tenure housing advice, and help and support for homeless people and those at risk of homelessness. The Service also provides advice and support to private sector landlords as part of its private rental housing scheme.

Under the new duties of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, when approaching as homeless an individual is entitled to a full Housing Needs Assessment which will detail their wants and needs in terms of both housing and any support they may require to keep or obtain housing. From this a Personalised Housing Plan will be agreed and drafted. This will detail the actions both the Council and the applicant can take to prevent their homelessness, including what options are available to meet their specific needs.

These options may include measures to enable them to stay in their current homes, or where not possible, seeking alternative accommodation. This may be in the private rented sector, through an allocation of social housing, a referral to supported accommodation, through the Councils Supported Tenancy Scheme or a nomination to a leased property with our partner's Vivid housing. In cases where a satisfactory resolution may not be found, temporary accommodation by way of Bed and Breakfast may be an option.

\*

Housing advice and guidance relating to rights across all tenure types, as well as homelessness, is available from Havant Citizens Advice (HCA) through the services commissioned under an £140k contract with Havant Borough Council. HCA provides support via a variety of media – in person, through webchat and telephone services and also by signposting clients to other agencies and specialists where appropriate, including Shelter and in-house staff. HCA's support is available to anyone and can include such measures as negotiating with landlords and providing support with court and legal advice and in doing so provides prevention work to on average 100 people a year threatened with immediate homelessness.

\*

Two Saints provides a comprehensive advice service through Hampshire County Council's Social Inclusion contract, offering support through referrals and drop-in services across a number of locations throughout the borough, including the Plaza, the Beacon in the Meridian Centre, Waterlooville and Hayling Island. They also offer to help people with finding accommodation as well as tenancy support to those housed. Two Saints has an ongoing active case load of 80 cases providing support to about 600 cases a year.

\*

Registered providers (RPs) of housing stock within the borough of Havant also provide tenancy support to their residents who are in breach of, or at risk of breaching, their tenancy obligations in an effort to maximise tenancy sustainment and reduce the level of repossession action resulting in homelessness.

The Guinness Partnership is the stock holder of the largest number of units within the borough having acquired the units from the Council through Large Scale Voluntary Transfer.

Tenancy support is provided in a variety of ways by the RPs with properties in the Havant district, who include Vivid, Radian, Guinness Partnership, Hyde and Aster, but in the main includes:

- Budgeting advice and financial planning
- Maximising income including advice on what benefits to claim
- Assistance to manage and get help with utility bills
- Improving health and accessing local services such as GP or specialist support such as for substance misuse
- Help into training and employment
- How to be a good tenant in regard to nuisance and anti-social behaviour

\*

Portsmouth City Council also provides support to its tenants who occupy the stock of accommodation they own within the borough of Havant, which amounts to in the region of 5,000 properties. They have a local neighbourhood office in Leigh Park from where housing officers manage the tenancies, with homelessness advice being provided from their housing advice and support team in their central offices in Portsmouth.

Given the unique situation Havant Borough Council and Portsmouth City Council find themselves in with one having stock within the other's borough, a Joint Working Protocol has also been developed to ensure that customers receive the correct service from their respective local authority and that duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 are followed consistently.

### **7.1.2 Financial support and advice services**

Housing Services can provide financial support aimed at prevention and relief of homelessness by assisting with start-up costs to secure accommodation and where appropriate, by making payments to sustain existing accommodation. The need for such support will be identified from completion of a Housing Needs Assessment and will form part of the Personalised Housing Plan. Support provided will be based on affordability and may include referral to other agencies to help further with sustaining financial stability.

\*

Financial advice and support is available from Havant Citizens Advice (HCA) which can include help with managing money; debt advice; tackling mortgage or rent arrears; help with banking; and utilising the StepChange Debt Charity Remedy tool. HCA seek to match people to charitable funding providers to maximise income or reduce debt. HCA also offer a ‘Help to Claim’ service at the Jobcentre to support people making Universal Credit claims and understand how the benefit works.

\*

Support for start-up costs to secure accommodation is available through Two Saints and they make direct referrals to HCA for budgeting and housing benefit advice to ensure future financial stability.

\*

The Revenues and Benefits Service of Havant Borough Council, which is provided by Capita Services, works closely with Housing Services to provide advice and support to household eligible for assistance through housing benefit (Local Housing Allowance) and provides supplementary support through its Discretionary Housing Payment scheme (DHP). DHP can support households facing unforeseen changes which create financial hardship such as that following a change in circumstances like a job loss or period of ill health. DHP has also been used to provide temporary support for households’ subject to changes in welfare benefit policy such as the ‘Bedroom Tax’ or Spare Room Subsidy.

### **7.1.3 Employment and training**

Housing Services has for the last two years facilitated a job fair at the Plaza inviting employers and training providers to show case their services in order to attract potential employees or students to their courses. These fairs have proved a success and hope to be continued as it is recognised that worklessness can lead to homelessness and enabling people to work or become work ready is a positive step towards preventing homelessness.

\*

Havant Citizens Advice provide advice on employment rights such as on pay; contracts; holiday and sick leave; flexible working, parental rights, discrimination and grievances.

\*

Community First through its *Positive Pathways* programme provides support for people looking to return to work, including confidence building, volunteering and work experience.

\*

Jobcentre Plus offers a wide range of help to support people back to work. Customers receive personalised support from their work coach. In addition, Jobcentre Plus offers work related training via partners such as colleges and training

providers as well as employability training to build job search skills, confidence and motivation. This is often focused on groups of customers with particular needs, such as health issues and disabilities or those who need to improve IT, literacy or other skills. In addition, work coaches signpost customers to a wide range of organisations in the area which can offer appropriate specialist support and information. Processes are in place to support vulnerable people such as those who are homeless or subject to domestic abuse. The Jobcentre works with a number of local and national employers to ensure customers have access to employment opportunities. This includes voluntary work experience placements to build confidence and work-related skills. Financial support can be available to assist with travel expenses to attend interviews or other items to overcome barriers to employment.

#### **7.1.4 Support with relationship problems and victims of domestic abuse**

Relationship support and advice is available through Havant Citizens Advice including marriage and civil partnerships; ending relationships; family relations; and domestic abuse or gender violence, with signposting to more specialist advice and services where appropriate.

\*

Domestic abuse services have recently been recommissioned through Hampshire County Council to provide accommodation and support services across Hampshire. Stop Domestic Abuse (SDA) is the provider currently contracted and in the Havant area provides emergency accommodation for victims of domestic abuse through its 6 bed unit in Havant and 9 bed unit in Alton in addition to two move-on properties in Havant. It has access to some limited funds to help support residents with start-up costs for moving in to rented accommodation.

#### **7.1.5 Support for Young People and Families**

Havant Borough Council's Supported Families Programme offers a range of support for families experiencing a range multiple complex needs including homelessness; worklessness; mental or physical health; school absences; offending or anti-social behaviour; or substance misuse issues. Each family will have a family plan and a key worker who will help co-ordinate support services. This service is time limited with funding due to end by March 2021.

Housing Services work in partnership with Hampshire County Council's Children in Care and Leaving Care teams to support young people who may be facing homelessness through end of in-care placements or when they are ready to access independent living.

\*

Motiv8 is based in The Hub, Park Parade, Havant, and offers a range of activities for young people aged between 11-19 years old. Such activities include advice on careers and volunteering and improving access to education, work and training; confidence building; support with health and wellbeing; a confidential Listening Ear

project in South Down college; and working in partnership with Hampshire County Council providing an intensive support service to the whole family including enhancing parental skills and support with family relationships.

\*

Off the Record (South East Hampshire) offers a free information, support and counselling service to young people between the age 11-25 through a local drop-in service in Havant, or by phone or email. Support around anxiety; stress with school/college; being a young carer; health and wellbeing and family relationships is on offer.

\*

Local schools and colleges, including South Downs and Havant; provide support through welfare advisors and will channel families for additional specialist help and advice by referring households to the Early Help Hub (EHH). The EHH provides a lead professional for families to co-ordinate services to support families through a range of support needs.

#### **7.1.6 Support for Older people**

Hampshire County Council's Adult Social Care (ASC) Independent Living services includes development of extra care accommodation for older people, and supports with digital technology to help people maintain their independence at home. ASC also have an obligation under the Care Act to carry out assessments of need and enable the provision of appropriate care to meet those needs.

\*

Age UK provides advice and support at local level and offers a dedicated advice line, a befriending service and a comprehensive advice and sign-posting services aimed at making living at home more manageable for older people. They can also provide advice and assistance with services specifically designed for older persons such as tax and pension advice; housing options; budgeting on retirement and signposting to health and care services.

#### **7.1.7 Support for mental health**

Hampshire County Council's Adult Social Care Mental Health Team (ASCMHT) has a statutory duty under the Care Act to carry out assessments and enable the provision of appropriate care to meet those needs which can include referrals to supported accommodation where there is a housing need. The ASCMHT provide social inclusion services to help people integration back into the community whilst the Community Mental Health (NHS Havant) can provide hostel accommodation through referral via the Parkway Centre, the police or GP services.

\*

Havant Housing Association specialises in support and accommodation for people with learning disabilities and mental health and has 120 units across Havant and Waterlooville. They provide long-term support and help with life skills and independent living through support workers and their mentoring services.

\*

Elmleigh provides inpatient acute services treatment and care for people with severe mental illness with three ‘step-down’ bed placements being available before patients move back to or on to independent living. Dedicated treatment plans are provided following individual assessment with referrals to services being completed by the GP through the local Community Mental Health Team.

\*

MIND operates local support from The Hub in Leigh Park through individual or group work and further help is available through iTalk which offers both web and phoned based advice and support.

\*

Richmond Fellowship is currently contracted through Hampshire County Council to provide supported housing through its shared homes and independent living units across Havant, East Hants, Fareham and Gosport. Accommodation is provided via stage 1 and stage 2 move on accommodation supporting residents to ultimately move on to independent living.

#### **7.1.8 Support for substance misuse**

Inclusion provides support and treatment at The Orion Centre in Havant, to anyone affected by drug or alcohol misuse and supports those seeking recovery as well as those impacted by someone else’s drug or alcohol use. Support is available through direct access to services.

#### **7.1.9 Support for ex-offenders**

The National Probation Service is a statutory criminal justice service that supervises high-risk offenders released into the community. The service provides ‘Approved Premises’ accommodation for some offenders where additional protection for the wider public is considered appropriate on their release from prison.

\*

The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Community Rehabilitation Company provide support to offenders to make lasting change looking at all aspects of their lives that may impact on their offending behaviour, such as lack of housing. The service provides support and advice including help with the completion of forms as well as sign-posting to other support providers. Support can also be provided to individuals with travel warrants to access services.

### **7.1.10 Support for rough sleepers**

Housing Services provide advice and assistance to rough sleepers presenting as homeless through the individual Housing Needs Assessments and resulting Personalised Housing Plans. Reports of rough sleepers requiring support are also received in Housing Services via the Streetlink website and referred to Two Saints to engage with the rough sleeper and ensure that support and assistance is offered. The Council are also responsible for monitoring the need for a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol provision whereby rough sleepers are accommodated during periods of severe weather, such as freezing temperatures or bouts of heavy rainfall.

\*

Two Saints is commissioned by Hampshire County Council through the Social Inclusion contract and part of their provision is to work with single people and provide support to rough sleepers and to those who require help finding alternative accommodation. Two Saints provides drop-in services throughout the local area and support in the community.

\*

The Beacon, Portsdown Community Church and the Havant Homeless Trust work together to provide food, laundry vouchers, clothing and emergency supplies including tents and sleeping bags to rough sleepers.

\*

The Homeless Network Meeting is held quarterly and attended by Housing Services, Two Saints, the police, Havant Citizens Advice, The Beacon, Community First and the local churches to discuss the provision of services to rough sleepers and identify where gaps in services need to be filled.

\*

Winchester Night Shelter provides 17 night-shelter places for over 18's with 1-2-1 support provided (including tenancy training) and 8 off-site placements. Attached to this, the Trinity Day Centre provides advice and support including a 6-week well-being course. The night shelter does not operate a local connection criteria so referrals from Havant can be considered.

### **7.1.11 Food, clothing, transport, furniture, etc**

The Beacon Foodbank alongside Portsdown Community Church provides daily support through its Café in the Meridian Centre by way of providing a listening ear, food and signposting to other support agencies. It specifically works with Havant Citizens Advice and Two Saints to provide extra support.

Further foodbank support is available through the Waterlooville Foodbank and Foodbank PO9 which is administered through St Francis' Church Leigh Park and St Claire's Church, Warren Park, Havant.

\*

The United Reform Church in Havant provides free lunches on Saturdays. They, together with other churches in the district, also have stock of clothes and through the Homeless Trust can also provide laundry vouchers.

\*

The Havant Homeless Trust also received some grant funding through Havant Borough Council from the South Hampshire Regional Rough Sleeping Group to provide provisions and support to assist rough sleepers.

\*

The Probation Service can provide travel warrants to those on probation to assist with help to access accommodation.

\*

The SCRATCH Project in Southampton provides a service to people within the Southampton and surrounding areas to assist relieve the effects of poverty. They can provide furniture, carpets, domestic appliances and removals via referral from a professional agency. Services are not all free, but whatever costs incurred are minimal.

\*

Stella's Voice charity shop at the Tanneries in Havant provides low cost donated items of furniture and household goods for sale.

\*

The *Connect to Support Hampshire* website

([www.connecttosupporthampshire.org.uk](http://www.connecttosupporthampshire.org.uk)) provides links to other support agencies. It is an online information and advice guide and directory of services for adult residents in Hampshire to find information, advice and services to manage their own care and wellbeing. There is also information about local groups, activities and services within the community as well as formal care provision.

**8      Q2) What barriers/issues have you encountered when trying to support homeless households?**

**Q3) What more needs to be done to overcome these barriers?**

The Homelessness Partnership Forum sought to identify what barriers it was felt there were for individuals accessing assistance when faced with homelessness.

As the feedback tended to fall into common categories, the responses have been grouped by subject or theme, together with any suggestions also given as to what more needs to be done to overcome these barriers.

## **8.1 The Customer Experience**

Many services felt customers were not accessing services soon enough or engaging with services effectively once they had done so.

The Duty to Refer has been brought in to ensure that public bodies recognise an individual's need for homelessness advice and are now obliged to ensure that referrals are made as early as possible so that services can start assisting with the appropriate housing advice to prevent homelessness.

A survey was undertaken to gauge how well the Housing Services Team are responding to and meeting the needs of customers who are approaching the Council for housing assistance when facing homelessness or who could be homeless. We contacted three groups of customers:

1. Customers at the start of their journey, accessing advice and assistance with an emerging housing issue
2. Customers accessing advice and assistance who were threatened with homelessness
3. Customers accessing advice and assistance who were homeless

They were asked to answer a series of questions via a telephone call.

### **Feedback summary from group 1:**

- Build more houses
- The lady who helped me was incredibly helpful and friendly

### **Feedback summary from group 2:**

- It all went really well, better communication with Housing Benefit team
- The officer who dealt with me was very polite and helpful

### **Feedback summary from group 3:**

- Service was good
- Some confusion between support worker and housing officer but when dealt directly with housing officer it got better
- Two Saints (support service referred to by housing officer) were fantastic

### **Overall collective findings**

- 38% of customers knew to come to the council for assistance
- 100% of customers accessed the housing service by coming into the offices
- 88% found it very easy to fairly easy to access housing services
- 50% felt their approach was dealt with very quickly/quickly and efficiently with the other 50% reporting an average approach
- 88% felt they were dealt with politely and respectfully to a great extent
- 100% felt that the advice they received was very clear and helpful

## **How is it going to impact the service delivery in the future?**

Feedback on the whole was very positive and complimentary with most customers finding the service easy to access with very clear and helpful advice.

However, there are some areas where we need to improve including:

- Promoting the services the council provides so customers know to approach us when they experience housing issues
- Look at ways to improve communications with other departments
- Look at ways to improve the speed and efficiency customers are dealt with when approaching housing to ensure an above average experience for all
- Continue to promote the need for more forms of suitable and affordable housing whether through social housing development or in partnership with the private rented sector

(for full response to customer survey please see appendix 3)

All services also need to examine why customers disengage and review their practices to ensure that re-engagement is possible when the individual is ready to do so, not continue to work on a 'three strikes and you're out' basis, understanding that individuals, especially those with complex needs, will take some time to engage effectively.

\*

Services experience customers with very complex needs which are difficult to address because of their lifestyle choices and behaviours and their lack of life skills, such as being able to manage budgets etc.

It is imperative that all services are aware of what help and assistance is available to our customers to help to start to address some of these issues and make appropriate referrals and signposting so that the support they need can be obtained. No one service can assist an individual in isolation, we all must work in partnership to put a team around the person to tackle the complex issues together.

\*

Services are also finding that customers have unrealistic expectations of what is available with regard to their housing options – what type of accommodation is available, in which areas, an unwillingness to consider short term supported or shared accommodation before moving on to a more settled solution, expectations about the availability of social housing.

We always strive to give customers as many housing options and choices as is available to them, but unfortunately the options are not always what the individual wants. We need to make sure that we carefully manage these expectations by being honest with customers about what is available and how, whilst it may not be what

they ultimately want, it is a step to a move on pathway to a better housing solution in the long run.

The Hampshire Home Choice based letting scheme is a method by which we can manage applicant's expectations with regard to social housing. All social housing properties are advertised for letting through the scheme, so applicants can see what is available. Feedback of lettings is also available through the web pages showing realistic waiting times for property types and areas, so applicants can consider their bidding strategies accordingly in order to optimise their prospects of rehousing through the scheme.

\*

Many services refer to the difficulties in trying to support customers who have both mental health and substance misuse issues often finding that mental health services will not support whilst substance misuse issues are still apparent.

It was felt that some work needs to be done around a dual diagnosis service and training for services to gain awareness of how to support these customers better.

\*

There was also some concern about those individuals who make a life-style choice of being homeless, those 'professional homeless' who choose to rough sleep and beg despite the offer of assistance from services of shelter and support.

The Homeless Network Group in conjunction with the Council had commenced some work on public awareness of how they can support rough sleepers and the homeless without inadvertently facilitating their lifestyle choice. This included suggestions such as not giving money directly to rough sleepers but rather donating to charitable organisations such as the churches or the Beacon who directly support individuals.

This can be picked up in the strategy action plan as a piece of work that can be continued to ensure that the homeless are supported in an appropriate way.

Havant Homeless Trust is seeking to obtain charitable status, so they can be the kind of organisation who can collect such donations and work in partnership with the other voluntary and community groups in the borough to support rough sleepers.

## **8.2 Public Perception and Involvement**

It was felt that there was a still a general unwillingness of private sector landlords to let to homeless households and that there was still a stigma surrounding homeless households particularly around young, single parent households.

More engagement with private sector landlords to encourage them to help homeless people was recommended and to manage the expectations of private sector landlords and encouraging them to offer help to those who are homeless.

The Council endeavours to support homeless households in to private rented accommodation and currently offers a wide range of support to do so from financial support to secure accommodation; referrals to Two Saints where it is felt Tenancy Training may be appropriate; the offer of ongoing support to both tenants and landlords should difficulties in the tenancy arise and signposting to other agencies and services who can provide support.

Through its Supported Tenancy Scheme the Council also offers a more robust offer of support to landlords and this is currently under review to see what more we can do to encourage landlords to free up their accommodation as a valuable resource for homeless households.

Housing Services are also interested in developing a Landlords Fair / Awareness Day for both public and social landlords to discuss our needs for accommodation to house homeless households and what support we can offer to both landlord and tenant to ensure both parties are happy and tenancies are sustained.

Some work also needs to be done with private sector landlords to be aware of the services offered to support their tenants who may be faltering on their tenancy obligations so that homelessness can be prevented. Landlords need to feel confident about the services they can refer their tenants to for early help.

\*

Homelessness and worklessness was also raised as an issue. It was difficult for services to help people in to employment if they were homeless - not having an address, not being able to prepare for interviews and chaotic lifestyles impacting on ability to obtain and retain employment successfully.

On the flip side, it was also noted that not being in work could be a barrier to obtaining housing – landlords are more likely to take a working person over someone who is not working.

As part of the Housing Needs Assessment when someone presents as homeless; matters which may be preventing someone keeping or obtaining accommodation will be discussed and as employment may be one of those matters, more work will be done to try and engage individuals in seeking employment, or support to ready themselves to seek employment, as a step to gaining or keeping accommodation.

The Council can continue to further this work through its annual Job Fair and services can work in conjunction with the Department of Work and Pensions Job Centre Plus to see how they can support and engage their customers into employment.

\*

There was also some concern about services and landlords dealing with individuals with mental health problems, especially around the risks posed where insufficient information is available about the individuals condition, treatment or risk posed, either to themselves or others.

There was also concern about the perceived lack of support to such individuals living in the community and that there was a failure to deal with low level mental health concerns which creates a bigger problem later.

Naturally there are constraints about what information can be shared about an individual's health circumstances and GDPR further exacerbates the level of information that can be shared without the individuals explicit consent.

Services therefore need to work together to ensure that their sharing protocols are robust and their privacy policies allow the necessary level of information to be shared between the services that are trying to support an individual – we cannot work in isolation when there are complex issues requiring multi-agency approaches and information sharing cannot be allowed to form a barrier to joined up working.

Services also need to be seeking up to date training and awareness to be able to deal with individuals with mental health issues so as not to be able to create their own barriers to providing support and assistance.

We must also not rely on stretched statutory services to provide support to individuals recognising that there are many community and voluntary services available, such as MIND or iTalk, and that these need to be utilised as much as possible.

### **8.3 Service Provision and Agency Working**

Concern was raised about the ongoing cuts to services which was resulting in a lack of resources – for example the reduction of housing support in hostels and the community and the ending of the Sure Start service.

The Council recognises the pressures that these funding reductions create and is keen to utilise the Flexible Homeless Support Grant awarded to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 to see what measures can be put in place to ensure the right services are in place to support those faced with homelessness.

It is also paramount that we are aware of each other's resources and what services we provide so that we are not duplicating processes and using resources ineffectively, but rather working together to pool resources where possible and provide services more cost effectively.

\*

As previously mentioned, Data Protection, GDPR and sharing information can be a barrier between services; particularly where consent to share is either not routinely gathered correctly or obtained too late to provide early and effective support to individuals.

Services need to ensure therefore that their data sharing protocols and privacy notices are robust enough not only to meet lawful requirements but also to ensure information can be shared early enough between services to allow effective interventions to be offered.

\*

Some services experience a high turnover of staff, particularly in areas such as social care. This can be detrimental to both the individual receiving the service where relationships have been built up and lost, or to another agency trying to liaise with customers support worker, with duty officers not always able to help as effectively as the case holder.

Services need to examine why their staff turnover is high and what is impacting on their staff retention. In order for other services to be able to liaise effectively on behalf of a customer, services need to ensure that access and referrals in to their services are clear and transparent and that their structures and points of contact are readily available; such as through websites.

\*

Throughout any discussions about barriers to services, communication is always a strong theme – lack of communication between agencies about what each service provides; how to access services; who is working with individuals that need to be involved in multi-agency meetings; lack of joint and partnership working; and lack of information being shared between services about individuals (for example when making referrals for assistance).

It is imperative that services work together more effectively, both for the benefit of the customer but also in order to work more effectively to preserve limiting resources. Joint working needs to be embedded in the culture all services as none of us can work in isolation when dealing with individuals with multi-faceted needs.

We must all look to see how we can better work together, ensure we attend multi-agency meetings and take responsibility for building networks and relationships with our partner agencies with the intention of improving communications.

\*

Some organisation felt that there could be more information provided about the services provided by Housing at the Plaza and what they do.

This is something the Council can achieve by ensuring that their website is up to date with this information.

The Housing Manager is also keen to visit other services, perhaps through their team meetings, to give an overview of what Housing Services are provided and how individuals can be assisted with their housing issues.

Other organisations have also been welcomed to attend Housing Services team meetings to reciprocate so that we can learn about their services too. Putting faces to names or visiting other organisations places of work is also useful in building relationships and understandings of each other services and resources.

\*

There has been some concern with organisations knowing who to sign post individuals to for further support. With such a plethora of information and services available, knowing about all of them can be difficult.

Websites such as the Connect to Support Hampshire can be a starting point or Havant Citizens Advice who often provide links to other services, but it is imperative that services make use of digital technology and ensure their website and media pages are clear in what services they can provide and how organisations and individuals can refer for support.

As an action point, Housing Services can ensure that their webpages are not only clear about what services they can provide, but also provide clear links to other services who can provide support with the many issues that affect someone who is faced with homelessness.

Plans are afoot to catalogue the voluntary and community support available to the homeless so that this can be made available on Havant Borough Council's website along with the information available on rough sleepers and the SWEP/Streetlink provisions.

\*

There was concern raised about the unpredictable and short notice discharges from hospital for individuals facing homelessness with services having little or no time to respond.

It was envisaged that the newly introduced Duty to Refer, with inpatient hospitals being one of the named public bodies with a responsibility to refer, would see a reduction in this happening and with patients being discharged being referred to services in a timelier manner.

\*

Some services were concerned about the location of emergency accommodation (B&B) with the majority of what Housing Services have access to being out of borough and the impact this can have on households, particularly those with local employment, children in schools or needing to be near local networks for support.

The Council recognises that this is an issue and in all cases, seeks to find the best housing solution for individuals within the resources available. Where this is not possible and placements out of borough need to be made, the Council will endeavour to move people back as soon as possible, although this then creates additional issues with multiple moves taking place, causing further instability and unsettled situations.

In order to combat this, Housing Services continues to look for more appropriate housing solutions and will endeavour to work more closely with housing providers, as explained earlier, to try and develop more housing options for individuals which will negate the need for moves to unsuitable, temporary accommodation.

In the meantime, Housing Services will always strive to ensure that if placed out of borough, individuals are provided with access to services and support that will reduce the impact on their household.

\*

As already mentioned, there was concern about the relative insecurity of housing tenure within the private rented sector. One recommendation was that other models of tenancy are created that have longer terms available than the current standard six or twelve month Assured Shorthold Tenancy.

These matters are of course, outside of local government control and would require central government amendments to the current legislative framework.

Ministers have acknowledged this issue and stated that due to the significant changes in the private rented sector over the last 30 years, e.g. a 50% increase in the number of households with children renting in this sector, there was a need to address the question of short term contracts, unaffordable rent rises and the possibility of retaliatory eviction if tenants complained.

In July 2018, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, published its consultation paper Overcoming the Barriers to Longer Tenancies in the Private Rented Sector.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/721556/PRS\\_Longer\\_Tenancies\\_Consultation.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721556/PRS_Longer_Tenancies_Consultation.pdf)

The Minister confirmed that he was seeking views on a new model – one that balances the tenants' need for protection, with landlords' needs to regain their property when their circumstances change; a model that gives tenants certainty over rents and retains the flexibility that many desires.

The consultation closed on the 26th August 2018 and the government is currently analysing the feedback it has received.

In the meantime, to help mitigate this issue, a positive measure announced in the recent Housing White Paper mean most tenants in the Build to Rent sector (a relatively new form of tenure but now included in the definition of affordable housing- NPPF July 2018) will be offered a minimum three-year tenancy.

With the introduction of the Localism Act 2011, social housing landlords were able to introduce fixed term tenancies to ensure that social housing continued to be provided to those with a housing need. In the main, fixed terms of five or six years are preceded by an introductory, or probationary tenancy, of one year, amounting to a secure period of at least six to seven years before a tenant's need for social housing would be reviewed.

Most fixed terms were not introduced until around 2012, so we will only just start to see the impact this may have on any tenancies coming to an end where there may no longer be a need for social housing. However, the Council would expect to see social housing landlords providing robust advice and assistance to tenants who may need to move on and referring any such cases to Housing Services where homelessness may become a factor, in accordance with the Tenancy Strategies produced by local authorities as an outcome of the Act.

\*

There appears to be a lot of confusion surrounding 16/17 year olds and young care-leavers and which agency should be responsible for providing support. Whilst both cohorts would be afforded priority need status under the homelessness legislation, the duties to assist fall to two differing agencies - Children's Social Care taking responsibility for young people who at 16 or 17 years old would still be seen as minors and local authority Housing Services having responsibility for care leavers once they have reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The 'Hampshire Joint Working Protocol between Housing and Children's Services for 16 and 17 year olds in Housing Need' seeks to clarify the duties and responsibilities for each organisation and has been reviewed to reflect the requirements under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

As part of its duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, housing services are responsible for ensuring that services for certain client groups (care leavers being one of them) have services tailored to their specific needs. This may include providing clear information about what can be provided and by who. Housing

Services therefore need to ensure that its information available on its website and to other services, clearly informs of this information.

Housing Services and Children's services also need to work in partnership to carry out joint assessment, both for housing needs and any care needs, to support young people and therefore need to ensure that their services are geared up to do so.

\*

It is recognised that there is a lack of night shelter accommodation in the borough and referrals to out of district night shelters are a concern as an individual may travel a great distance to a shelter when they cannot be guarantee a bed-space on arrival.

Whilst the numbers of rough sleepers in Havant do not constitute the need for a night shelter on the scale as in other authorities, it is still recognised that street sleeping is not acceptable and for those few people who find themselves rough sleeping, their needs to be an alternative and local option, particularly in times of inclement weather.

Havant Borough Council works closely with Two Saints to see that rough sleepers are supported and that accommodation in their homeless supported accommodation is utilised to its capacity. However, with only five bed spaces, this is very limited.

The Council are therefore working to see how it can support Two Saints to increase these bed spaces and look to provide an emergency provision, especially in the winter months.

\*

There were concerns raised about funding and time-limits for those in refugees having fled domestic violence.

The Council works proactively with Stop Domestic Abuse (SDA), the service commissioned by Hampshire County Council to provide domestic abuse services in the district. In doing so we can pool resources and support to ensure that individuals are able to find a suitable housing solution as soon as possible. Where this is not achievable, the Council can under its statutory homelessness duties, see what further assistance can be given with providing accommodation.

Whilst the domestic abuse services have only just recently been recommissioned, this is something that can be fed back to commissioning managers so that they are aware of the issues of short stay accommodation when revising the service provision requirements in future.

\*

There were similar concerns with the Probation Services Approved Premises which only provide short -term provision and there appears to be little move on help until the last minute.

There is again a need for Probation as a public body to refer to Housing Services any individuals leaving their accommodation with no further accommodation available to them at an earlier stage and not leave it until the last minute as is perceived.

This will ensure that a Housing Needs Assessment can be carried out as soon as possible so all housing options available can be explored in a timely manner.

\*

Having to meet local connection criteria before being able to access help from housing services and having to apply to specific housing authorities was also flagged as a concern.

Under the Localism Act 2011 Councils were able to formulate their allocation policy criteria to take into account local requirements. As many, if not all, placed a requirement that applicants had to establish a local connection to their district before they would be eligible to apply for social housing. Prior to publishing allocations policies, local authorities would have carried out consultation and considered any comments on the proposals to introduce a local connection.

Whilst having to have a local connection to a district may impact on an individual's ability to secure social housing, it does not preclude other housing options which can be pursued such as looking for private rented accommodation, which carries no such restrictions.

With regard to having to establish a local connection if presenting as homelessness, this is set in legislation and not at the local authority's discretion. However, local authorities do have the power to waive this requirement in exceptional circumstances.

\*

With resources being stretched, thresholds for services increasing and waiting times lengthening, there was also concern raised at the lack of a sufficient provision of adult social care and delays caused by waiting for the outcome of assessments.

Under the Care Act, Adult Social Care do have a responsibility to carry out care assessments and enable the provision of appropriate care to meet those needs.

If Adult Social Care are unable to provide assessment and support as quickly as possible, services may need to look for other options to fill the gap in the meantime. Other agencies dealing with individuals with care needs due to age, ill health,

learning disabilities or mental health issues may be better placed to assist in the short term.

It is for this reason that websites such as Connect to Support Hampshire have been devised to enable individuals to self-care, or look for interim support to help with care until full assessments of needs can be carried out.

\*

There was some thought that social landlords should be more proactive with signposting early to support services and that they work more closely with local services before acting to evict households ensuring support is put in place to deal with the issues that lead many to lose their tenancies.

As mentioned earlier in this document, social landlords who have housing stock in Havant all have a commitment to provide tenancy support to prevent people losing their tenancies. This couple with the Ministry of Justices Repossession Protocol that registered providers need to adhere to before taking repossession action means that they strive to do all they can to prevent having to take repossession action.

However, social housing landlords must not rely on their in-house tenancy support provisions alone and must strive to involve other agencies and services as early as possible, not just at the point of eviction.

This is where multi-agency partnership working is paramount so that we are all aware of what services we provide and how we can work together to help our customers, as none of us can do it in isolation.

Whilst social housing providers are not recognised as a public body and therefore not bound by this duty, the National Housing Federation (NLA) has been working with its members who were keen to support the implementation of the Act regardless. As such, the NLA has produced a Commitment to Refer which social housing landlords can sign up to.

Housing Services in Havant works very closely with its stock holding social housing providers to ensure that tenants who are facing eviction or referred for advice and assistance as early as possible.

\*

It has also been recognised that some social landlords appear reluctant to take applicants with support needs, which appears at odds with such providers being ‘social’ landlords and therefore seen as being providers of accommodation to those most in need.

Unfortunately, with service reductions across both housing related support contracts and social housing landlord’s resources to provide support to tenants, there is

naturally a reticence to consider allocating social housing accommodation to individuals whose needs may impact on their ability to successfully manage a tenancy.

It is therefore important when assessing housing needs and eligibility to join the register for social housing that Housing Services ensure that they identify the applicants that may have ongoing support needs and ensure that signposting and referrals to organisations and agencies who can support these individuals are made.

If robust support and engagement with support is in place at the time of allocation, the social housing providers are less likely to reject those with support needs.

On occasions applicants with support needs are skipped for accommodation if it is not deemed unsuitable to meet their needs. For example, for an applicant with support needs due to recovering from substance misuse, it would not be in the best interest to allocate a tenancy in a property where there are known anti-social behaviour or substance misuse issues having to be addressed by the landlord. This is likely to adversely impact the applicant's ability to successfully manage their tenancy and retain their accommodation.

#### **8.4 Housing Supply**

As already mentioned, there was concern about the insecurity of housing tenure with the recommendation that other models of tenancies are created and longer tenancies given. These matters are outside of local government remit, but we are aware central Government is looking at this.

\*

Further concerns were raised around the standard of accommodation that is available in the private sector and the perceived mismanagement of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO).

The Council's Environmental Health Services Private Sector Housing Team works closely with landlords in the district to ensure that standards of accommodation are in line with the Housing, health and Safety Rating System, reducing the number of cat 1 hazards in accommodation wherever possible.

This team is also responsible for enforcing the recently reviewed HMO licensing regulations, to ensure that any mismanagement it was felt is occurring is driven out of the sector.

\*

There was overwhelming concern at the lack of all types of affordable accommodation to meet the varying needs of those who are homeless or faced with homelessness in the district.

It was felt that there was a lack of accommodation in particular for:

- a direct access hostel
- supported housing, particularly for the young and the old
- move-on accommodation for those already in supported housing
- a lack of rooms and issues with the safety of rooms/shared houses

Questions raised as to whether social housing landlords, as the stock holders within the borough, could help more with the provision of temporary accommodation, or whether other forms of housing provision could be looked such as porta cabins, as are being utilised in some other areas, and how we can make better use of empty properties and bring them back into use.

When trying to address the need for more housing provision, we need to be mindful of exactly what are needs are before we can look to see how they can be met. We then need to work with our partners to see how these can be achieved. For example, if a housing association has a stock of particularly difficult to let properties, is there scope for these to be used as temporary accommodation? And how can our partners help with move on accommodation for those who are ready to move on to independent living?

The Council continues and will continue to work with its registered providers through its allocation policy; support providers through the provision of hostel accommodation and how this can be increased; and with private sector landlords through its Supported Tenancy Scheme to endeavour to increase the housing supply to those who are facing homelessness.

## **8.5 Financial Inclusion**

Concerns were raised with regard to the levels of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) which doesn't currently meet the market rents being charged in the private rented sector. This makes looking at private rented accommodation as a housing option very restrictive to households who are benefit reliant or on low incomes.

There are also issues with the level of rent in advance, deposits and guarantors required to secure accommodation in the private rented sector which for some, is out of their financial reach.

The Council can continue to look at assisting households with financial support to secure private rented accommodation within its duties to prevent or relieve

homelessness and ensuring that customers are signposted to receive money advice to sustain accommodation. Wherever possible, the Council will also bid for additional Government funding through its homelessness prevention initiatives to continue to support customers into accommodation, although ensuring that affordable accommodation is secured is still the challenge to be overcome.

\*

It was also noted that housing associations are starting to ask for rent in advance for social tenancies, which can be of varying degrees from one week to up to six weeks. There have even been occasions when rent in advance has been asked before taking up supported accommodation. This may be manageable for those who have been waiting for some time for an offer through the Hampshire Home Choice housing waiting list and have had the opportunity to save for this eventuality, but for those who are being housed as a result of a homeless situation and have not had the ability to do so, this is a concern.

Again, the Council can continue to support customers who require financial assistance to secure accommodation in order to prevent homelessness, but a question as to whether housing associations could do more to assist with such requests, either allowing tenants a period of time to pay, or being more flexible with who has to meet these requirements if it can be evidenced that prospective tenants are already housing benefit/LHA eligible.

\*

To mitigate the financial risk to landlords in letting to customers on low incomes or benefit reliant – which has also been raised as a concern – it is suggested that rent guarantees or payments of housing benefit/LHA/UC housing element could be paid direct to the landlord. Such processes may help to encourage supply of this valuable resource.

\*

Concerns were raised at the general complication of the welfare benefit system; the absence of a face-to-face service when having to apply for welfare benefit support and having to make applications by telephone or via a website; delays in payments of benefits and housing benefit; and welfare benefit sanctions and perceived ‘hostility’ towards jobseekers who do not or are unable to comply with their claimant commitment contracts.

The Council and its partners can continue to support welfare benefit claimants by ensuring that they are fully aware of the claiming process; what they need to provide in order to get their claims processed in a timely fashion and where claimants can go for support, particularly when sanctioned. The Council is also, through its Customer Services Team, is a point of contact for referrals from the DWP for those vulnerable customers who need assistance with making their UC claims.

\*

It has also been noted that there is a lack of legal aid funding to support those needing help when threatened with homelessness. Advisors therefore need to be aware of the eligibility criteria for claiming legal aid and where to direct customers who may need support with identifying if they are eligible, such as to HCA.

Where customers aren't eligible, advisors need to be aware of other advice support agencies who can assist with some form of legal advice such as the local authority's housing services; HCA and organisations such as Shelter.

\*

Customers are also finding there is a lack of help with transport costs to access services or get to appointments they need to keep, either to comply with benefit claiming requirements or to engage with services that may be supporting them to prevent homelessness.

Again, there needs to be an all-round awareness among advisors across agencies and collation of what support is available to help in such circumstances and where this help can be obtained from to best support customers in need.

\*

From 1st August 2019 Hampshire Adult Social Care are reducing the funding for Social Inclusion Services across Hampshire by £1.8m. Homelessness Support Services (the collective name for Social Inclusion Services and the Winchester Night Shelter) are housing related support services for people over the age of 18 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This loss of the provision of early support is seen as a big concern which may lead to customers getting in to crisis and being unable sustain tenancies or secure interventions to prevent homelessness.

As a response Havant Borough Council is able to utilise funding from the Flexible Homelessness Prevention Grant awarded to develop measures required to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act to future fund a housing related support worker to bridge the gap created by this reduction of Social Inclusion funding.

## **9.0 Housing Services feedback**

We also sought the comments of the staff working on the front line in Housing Services to ascertain their thoughts on the same questions raised with the Homelessness Partnership Forum.

The Housing Services team currently consists of 18 members of staff, 2 of which are Managers and one of which is on maternity leave. 15 members of staff were therefore surveyed and 4 responded.

Staff were asked '*What are the main barriers/issues that you have encountered when trying to support homeless households?*':

- Lack of suitable and affordable accommodation of all types – social, private rented, temporary, interim, supported, hostel
- Access to private rented sector difficult due to high rents, landlords not willing to take people on benefits/wanting guarantors
- Lack of, and impending further reduction in housing related support, to sustain accommodation and stop repeat approaches
- Customers with complex needs that are difficult to meet
- Customers lack of wanting to take responsibility (ie completing forms; providing documentation required; willingness to consider options available)
- Some lack of consistent working approach amongst housing officers
- Staff feeling overwhelmed, anxious, stressed and successes not being recognised and celebrated

Staff were also asked '*What more needs to be done to overcome these barriers?*' and the following comments were received:

- Increase the supply of affordable and suitable accommodation
- Improve engagement with private sector and registered provider landlords to encourage partnership working
- Look at the landlord offer to increase access to the private rented sector – consider bonds rather than deposits; increase the upfront financial support; increase direct rental payments to landlords
- Closer working across Hampshire Home Choice partners to improve access to and make better use of housing stock
- Increase the supply of tenancy support

The responses in the main were very similar to those voiced by the Homelessness Partnership Forum and stakeholder survey and will therefore be recognised and contribute towards the actions to come out of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

## **10.0 Summary and Conclusion**

### **10.1 Areas of success**

The homelessness review has identified that there are a number of areas where a lot of good work and services are being provided by the Council and its partners in the Havant area

These include:

- A good and robust housing options service which is compliant with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Receipt of New Burdens and Flexible Homelessness Support Grant in order to implement new legislation
- Staff restructure to meet the needs of the service

- Good performance levels on prevention
- Housing related support services in place
- Good partnership working with partner register providers of housing; neighbouring Portsmouth City Council housing services; and private sector landlords
- Financial support to secure or retain accommodation available
- Budgeting and debt management advice available
- Support to access training and employment or be work ready
- Support with relationships and those suffering domestic abuse
- Support for families and young people
- Support for older people
- Support for those with mental health issues
- Support for those with substance misuse issues
- Support for ex-offenders
- Support for rough sleepers
- Support for those leaving prison or hospitals through Duty to Refer

## 10.2 Emerging issues

However, there are areas which are seen as needing improvement, such as:

- The need for customers to engage earlier to allow interventions to be considered
- Managing the expectations of customer as to the housing options available
- Lack of temporary accommodation within the borough
- Lack of move on accommodation from temporary or supported accommodation
- Lack of affordable social and private rented accommodation
- Understanding the needs of rough sleepers and managing the support on offer
- Managing the reduction in support to prevent homelessness
- Better communication and multi-agency working between organisations
- Embedding that ‘homelessness prevention is everyone’s responsibility’ in to all organisations

## 10.3 Priorities for action

It is the areas that require development that will feed into Havant Borough Council’s Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy and drive the priorities for action.

1. The need for customers to engage earlier to allow interventions to be considered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue to promote the Duty to Refer to public bodies and encourage non-public bodies to adopt a commitment to refer</li></ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better promote the services available from Housing Services and how customers can engage at an early stage</li> <li>• Provide more robust awareness amongst professionals of the services Housing Services Provide and how they can refer their customers at an earlier stage</li> <li>• Improve access to advice and assistance through the Councils website and the Hampshire Home Choice website</li> </ul>
2. Managing the expectations of customer as to the housing options available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure we have a comprehensive package of housing options available to meet diverse needs</li> <li>• Ensure options available are transparent and explained so informed choices can be made</li> <li>• Ensure other professional organisations are aware of the housing options available so as not to misinform their customers</li> </ul>
3. Tackling public perceptions of homelessness and addressing stereotypes to ensure that access to accommodation is increased	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure website information is easy to access and up to date</li> <li>• Investigate the possibility of ‘tenancy training’ to demonstrate skills obtained to ensure applicants can manage a tenancy and minimise risk to landlords</li> </ul>
4. Lack of temporary accommodation within the borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the current temporary accommodation available</li> <li>• Explore other options within the borough by continuing to work with registered providers, supported housing providers and private sector landlords</li> </ul>
5. Lack of move on accommodation from temporary or supported accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore other options within the borough by continuing to work with registered providers, supported housing providers and private sector landlords</li> <li>• Continue to promote and expand the Supported Tenancy Scheme</li> </ul>
6. Affordability and Welfare Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close monitoring of Universal Credit will be required to assess the impact of accessing and maintaining accommodation</li> <li>• Close partnership with registered providers, the private sector and DWP so that housing services can be alerted to the issues that may lead to homelessness at the earliest opportunity</li> </ul>
7. Lack of affordable social and private rented accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to encourage the development of social / affordable housing with developers and registered providers</li> <li>• Continue to work with registered providers to ensure the best use of stock within the</li> </ul>

	<p>borough through creative letting and local lettings plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work with private sector landlords to encourage the availability of suitable accommodation</li> <li>• Consider the introduction of a Landlords Fair to engage with private landlords</li> </ul>
8. Understanding the needs of rough sleepers and managing the support on offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand on annual rough sleeper count/estimate and carry out a robust needs analysis of those rough sleeping</li> <li>• Carry out analysis of data available on sofa surfing activity and target advice and assistance to prevent this slipping in to rough sleeping</li> <li>• Continue to work with statutory and non-statutory bodies and voluntary and community groups to co-ordinate data about rough sleepers</li> <li>• Continue to work with statutory and non-statutory bodies and voluntary and community groups to co-ordinate services available to rough sleepers</li> <li>• Through joint work, encourage the safe practice of supporting rough sleepers through voluntary and community organisations rather than direct assistance to an individual</li> </ul>
9. Look at whether Housing First is a model that could be successful in Havant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the option for more challenging and complex households</li> <li>• Review other models to determine suitability</li> <li>• Discuss with accommodation providers and support services</li> </ul>
10. Managing the reduction in support to prevent homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Map out and create a directory of support services available to refer customers to as an alternative</li> <li>• Encourage the promotion of self-service advice through digital access</li> <li>• Make a commitment to ensure financial support is available to continue to commission local housing related support</li> <li>• Consider the use of Tenancy Training to empower tenancy sustainment and reduce the need for ongoing support</li> </ul>
11. Better communication and multi-agency working between organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure Housing Services are a committed presence and multi-agency meetings, both statutory and non-statutory</li> <li>• Promote the services provided by Housing Services within other organisations and agencies, both statutory and non-statutory</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure good working relationships are forged, particularly with other statutory organisations</li> <li>• Ensure that multi-agency working around and individual is encouraged at the earliest opportunity</li> </ul>
12. Embedding the concept that 'homelessness prevention is everyone's responsibility' in to all organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the formulation of a Homelessness Reduction Board at a strategic level</li> <li>• Ensure that senior leadership across all organisations is committed to the reduction of homelessness being high on their agenda</li> <li>• Ensuring that homelessness or potential homelessness is a routine consideration of all organisations when dealing with their customers</li> <li>• Ensuring that awareness of homelessness is embedded the operational staff's skills set in all organisations</li> <li>• Promoting and supporting the Duty to Refer</li> </ul>
13. Agree top priorities for expenditure of Flexible Homelessness Support Grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree priorities and explore options for expenditure that offers best value</li> </ul>
14. Ensure officers are kept up to date on relevant legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review training for all members of staff</li> <li>• Identify training gaps and arrange appropriate training and awareness sessions</li> </ul>

## Appendix 1

### **AFFORDABLE HOUSING STATEMENT 2019 – 2020**



#### **Mission**

To improve people's lives by ensuring that new development will meet the needs of those genuinely in need of affordable homes. We aim to increase the supply of affordable housing across a range of tenures to enable all sections of society have access to a home.

#### **Priorities**

This Affordable Housing Statement supports the delivery of the Council's Corporate Strategy 2015-2020. The Strategy contains five operational priority areas; these are: Financial Stability, Economic Growth, Environmental Sustainability, Public Service Excellence, and Creativity and Innovation; it's these priorities that run as a golden thread through our work in the housing sector.

The Council has set several key priorities for the coming years with ambitious targets that will ultimately be the measure of our success. These targets will remain at the forefront of our minds in the delivery of the Housing Service and the provision of new affordable housing.



### **Supply of new homes**

There is significant demand for affordable housing within the Havant Borough Council area, both Affordable Rented, and Low-Cost Home Ownership properties, as demonstrated by the numbers of applicants registered on Hampshire Home Choice, the councils waiting list, and Help to Buy South, our regional Help to Buy Agents. According to waiting list data as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 the combined total need for affordable homes is 2563 dwellings.

This data suggests there is a greater need for affordable rented homes compared with that for Intermediate affordable homes with 1603 (62.5% of total need) waiting for affordable rented homes when compared to 960 (37.5% of total need) on the waiting list for intermediate affordable homes. This compares with the most recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment which suggests a need for 74% Social/Affordable rent and 26% Intermediate homes, e.g. Shared Ownership or Shared Equity. The Pre-submission Havant Borough Local Plan 2036 responds to this data by seeking 30% affordable homes on sites of 10 or more units, with a tenure split 70/30 in favour of the rented homes.

The table below shows Havant's delivery levels of affordable housing over the last 6 years.

Year	Shared Equity	Discounted Market Sale	Social Rent	Affordable Rent	Intermediate Rent	Rent To Buy	Shared Ownership	First Buy	Mortgage Rescue	<b>TOTAL For each year</b>
2013-14	2		2	49			20	16		<b>89</b>
2014-15		6		159			61		2	<b>228</b>
2015-16			3	83	1		64			<b>151</b>
2016-17			2	92	19	16	39			<b>168</b>
2017-18				53	5	1	17			<b>76</b>
2018-19				67		12	15			<b>94</b>
<b>TOTAL For each tenure</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>503</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>806</b>

Priority	Target
Increase the supply of affordable housing within the borough by supporting Registered Providers, Housing Associations, house builders, and other stakeholders in the sector to build new homes. This support will take the form of a firm, but fair approach to negotiating s106 agreements, with a sensible, and practical approach that recognises the challenges house builders and providers face in the sector. We will strive for the removal of barriers to development so stakeholders regard Havant as a priority investment area, making Council funds available to support affordable housing delivery where required.	170 new affordable homes built in the district by April 2021
To ensure that the sector builds affordable housing of the right size, type, and tenure that meets the housing need as identified by the Council. Changes introduced in the Welfare Reform Act and Housing and Planning Act have caused Registered Providers to rethink the size, type, and tenure of	40% of all new affordable homes to have 2 bedrooms. 70/30 tenure split in favour of affordable rented homes.

<p>affordable housing to maximise their revenue. This priority will ensure the Council robustly defends attempts by housing providers to build homes that do not serve the needs of communities well.</p>	
<p>Some types and tenures of affordable housing are unaffordable to low income households, and those entitled to full or partial welfare benefits. The Government has reacted to this and is once again promoting Social Rent housing typically set at target rents around 50-60% of rents in the Private Rented Sector. It is a priority that Social Rent housing is promoted as well as other initiatives that deliver 'genuinely' affordable housing.</p>	<p>Work with Registered Providers, Planning Officers and Members to promote the inclusion of Social Rent homes and truly affordable rents that have regard to local incomes into adopted planning and Section 106 (Town &amp; Country Planning Act 1990) policy.</p>
<p>To shape and influence housing policies contained within Havant Borough Council Local Plan, and any supplementary documents, to ensure that they accurately reflect the housing needs of the borough.</p>	<p>To maintain the strong links already enjoyed with, and continue to provide advice to, Development Management and Planning Policy officers, and consultants working on the Local Plan.</p>
<p>Keeping Members informed and consulting with them on new affordable housing initiatives is an integral part of Local Government and the smooth operation of the council.</p>	<p>Attend Portfolio Holder update meetings, as required, and ensure officer representation, where possible, at Development Consultation Forums, Development Management committee meetings, and Technical workshops.</p>
<p>Modular housing, including housing pods, under the umbrella term of Modern Methods of Construction, is becoming more common place in the market.</p> <p>Legal &amp; General, including their new modular homes manufacturing business, have recently partnered with VIVID Homes, who are actively</p>	<p>To research, engage with providers, and evaluate whether MMC can provide some solutions to our current housing shortage.</p> <p>To seek to identify sites within the borough that may be suitable for pod type short term housing.</p>

<p>developing affordable homes in our area.</p> <p>This type of accommodation may provide enable developers to provide housing more quickly and more cost efficiently than traditional building methods.</p>	
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## Housing Investment

Priority	Target
<p>To invest Council funds in innovative new models of providing affordable housing that not only provide a range of tenures to support our mission, but also assist with the supply of temporary accommodation available in the borough.</p>	<p>To invest circa £100000 of developer's contributions to enable the purchaser of Brent House to affect renovations to provide temporary accommodation for families and single people facing homelessness in the borough.</p> <p>Also, to maintain engagement with, and assist smaller Alternative Affordable Housing Providers to develop in our area.</p>

## Appendix 2 Organisations and partners we work with

<b>Organisation</b>
Age UK
Astor Group
Beacon Centre
BME/cultural groups
Christians Against Poverty
Citizens Advice Havant
Community First
Customer Inclusion Adviser
DWP (Havant)
Elmleigh Hospital
Elmleigh (social work team)
Food Banks
Guinness Housing Group
Havant Homeless Trust
Havant Housing Association
Home Group
Housing Benefits
Hyde Group
Inclusion
MIND
Neighbourhood Team (HBC)
Off the Record
Orion Centre
Parkway Mental Health Team
Police
Probation
Radian
Richmond Fellowship
Roberts Centre
Social Services (Adults and Childrens)
Stop Domestic Abuse
Sovereign
SSAFA
St Faith's Church
Step By Step
Stonewater Group
Supporting Families
The Grange AP
Two Saints
VIVID
Winchester Night Shelter
Winchester Prison Resettlement
You Trust

## Appendix 3

### Homeless Review 2019

### Havant BC Customer Survey

#### Service User Survey Findings

##### 1. Group One – Customers at the very start of their journey, accessing advice and assistance with an emerging housing issue

- 9 customers surveyed, 3 responded
- 2 out of 3 customers knew to come to the council for assistance
- The other customer was directed to the council by a family member
- All 3 customers approached us in person first by calling into the office
- All 3 customers felt it was very easy to access the housing service
- 2 out of 3 customers felt their approach was dealt with in an average timescale
- The other customer felt their approach was dealt with very quickly and efficiently
- 2 out of 3 customers felt that the staff treated them politely and respectfully to a great extent
- The other customer felt the staff treated them politely and respectfully to an average extent.
- All 3 customers felt that the advice they received was very clear and helpful

Customer feedback and ways to improve the service from this group:

- Build more houses
- The lady who helped me was incredibly helpful and friendly

##### 2. Group Two – Customers accessing advice and assistance who were threatened with homelessness

- 8 customers surveyed, 3 responded
- 1 of the customers knew to come to the council for assistance
- The other 2 customers were directed to the council by family members
- All 3 customers approached us in person first by calling into the offices
- 1 out of 3 customers found it very easy to access the housing service
- 2 out of 3 customers found it fairly easy to access the housing service
- 1 out of 3 customers felt their approach was dealt with very quickly and efficiently
- 1 customer found the approach dealt with in an average way and the third found the approach was dealt with quickly and efficiently
- All 3 customers felt that the staff treated them politely and respectfully to a great extent
- All 3 customers felt that the advice they received was very clear and helpful

Customer feedback and ways to improve service from this group:

- Better communication with Housing Benefit team
- The officer who dealt with me was very polite and helpful

3. Group Three - Customers accessing advice and assistance who were homeless

- 8 customers contacted, 2 responded
- Neither customer knew to come to the council for assistance, one was directed to the council by their support worker and the other was directed by a friend
- 1 customer out of 6 went to CA first.
- Both customers approached in person first by calling in to the offices
- 1 of the customers found it fairly easy to access the housing service
- 1 of the customers found it difficult to access the housing service
- 1 customer felt their approach was dealt with very quickly and efficiently whilst the other felt it was dealt with on average
- Both customers felt that the staff treated them politely and respectfully to a great extent
- Both customers felt the advice was given as very clear and helpful

Customer feedback and ways to improve the service from this group:

- Service was good
- Some confusion between support worker and housing officer but when dealt directly with housing officer it got better
- Two Saints (support service referred to by housing officer) were fantastic

4. Overall collective findings

- 38% of customers knew to come to the council for assistance
- 100% of customers accessed the housing service by coming into the offices
- 88% found it very easy to fairly easy to access housing services
- 50% felt their approach was dealt with very quickly/quickly and efficiently with the other 50% reporting an average approach
- 88% felt they were dealt with politely and respectfully to a great extent
- 100% felt that the advice they received was very clear and helpful

## Appendix 4

Grant funding received from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to support homelessness initiatives and measures:

Purpose of funding	2018-19	2019-20
New burdens	£61,369	£64,871
Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG)	£250,003	£306,009
Top up FHSG	n/a	£88,060
Rough Sleeper Initiative – joint partnership with EHDC	n/a	£35,000
Total	£311,372	£493,940

This grant funding is to be used to support any initiatives/projects which will prevent or relieve homelessness. The funds, apart from the RSI, can be carried forward if not spent in year – **at the present time there have been no further indications of whether there will be continued funding for 2020 and future years.**

To date the grant has been used for the following initiatives :-

Additional Staffing – 5 members of staff on fixed term contracts

SLAs with Two Saints to provide flexible Community Support following on from the reduction of £2.2m from the Hampshire CC Social Inclusion budget.

SLA with Two Saints to provide outreach to those in B&B outside the area.

2 x Supported lodgings placements

Loans and deposits to enable renting in the private sector.

Incentives to PRS Landlords

IT upgrades to ensure compliance with completing government statistics.

New initiatives identified in the review and contained within the Action Plan will be supported by this grant.

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