

Appendix 1

Background

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities to review homelessness, and the influencing factors that cause homelessness, and to develop a strategy which addresses the findings of the review.

Our 2017-2022 Homelessness Strategy for South Hams and West Devon has been designed to address changes in national policy, reductions in government spending, changes in demography in the area and the impact of the 2013 Welfare reform Bill, 2012 localism Bill and 2017 Homeless Reduction Act.

The Key Priorities for the Homelessness Strategy

The review of homelessness in South Hams and West Devon identified four key priorities to reduce and prevent homelessness.. These are:

- Understanding the True Cost of Homelessness
- Access to Housing
- Access to Services
- Health and Wellbeing

These four key priorities form the basis of the strategy and the annual Action Plan. Our 2018-19 Action plan has been developed following a review of the progress made to date on our existing 2017-18 Action plan.

Progress to date

Following the review of the 2017/18 Action Plan we are pleased to be able to confirm that good progress has been made on the actions for the year.

Review of 17/18 Action Plan

Understanding the True Cost of Homelessness

- In the year 2017-18 337 Households were prevented from becoming homeless in South Hams and 322 in West Devon.
- Our Money Advice Contract assisted 240 households across South Hams and West Devon in the financial year 2017/18 and brought in excess of £46,000 in previously unclaimed benefits and other entitlements.
- Our tenancy support service has worked with 79 households in the 6 months to March 2018.
- Our Social Prescribing pilot supported 169 customers across 6 GP surgeries. Surgeries reported a 64% decrease in visits to the GP following the social prescribing interventions.

Access to Services

- Increased focus on partnership working and improved relationships to facilitate earlier identification and more effective interventions.
 - Presentations delivered to Children's services on services available from Housing Advice and appropriate referral pathways to increase opportunities for early intervention and joint working.
 - Creation of a Joint Working Protocol with Devon County Council Children's Services for 16/17yr olds at risk of homelessness to ensure effective joint working practices.
 - Increased outreach presence negotiated with Drug and Alcohol services to address issues facing those rough sleeping.
- Expansion of the roles of our Localities team members to improve outreach provision to our vulnerable customers. This includes support with claims for Housing Benefit and Devon Home Choice applications.
- New website content launched
- Work undertaken to improve relationships with Landlords and Housing associations to increase focus on early identification of those with tenancy sustainment issues.

Access to Housing

- Approval received for creation of a letting agency in West Devon in addition to the existing agency in South Hams.
- Value for money review undertaken on existing lettings scheme in South Hams to ensure scheme remains viable and attractive to landlords. This has resulted in a reduction in the management charges levied to landlord to ensure our offer is competitive.
- Shared room accommodation and single person units identified as in significant shortage in South Hams and West Devon. Focus to be given to expanding the accommodation type managed as part of the lettings schemes to include HMO accommodation.
- Ongoing consideration being given to shared accommodation tenure options being included as part of new developments.

Health and Wellbeing

- Expansion of our existing Health and Wellbeing panel to include a panel dedicated to finding solutions for those with a need for adapted housing. Panel due to be launched in May 2018.

- Six Seminar presentations on housing choices successfully delivered to students at KEVICC in Totnes
- 50% success rate on securing long term housing for rough sleepers across both districts following severe weather interventions.
- Expanded outreach provision from Drug and Alcohol support services to rough sleepers in Totnes.

Actions to be rolled over as incomplete:

- Landlord forums to be established in West Devon
- Vulnerable Customer Charter to be finalised
- Work with schools to be expanded to include all major secondary schools