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FOREWORD

Introduction

For many people the term 'homelessness' evokes images of the 'rough sleeper', however, homelessness and the services provided by the Local Authority are far more complex and widespread than this. This can include people living in insecure, unsuitable or unaffordable housing as well as those required to leave their existing housing, often through no fault of their own.

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

The Homelessness Strategy is required to:

- Address the levels of homelessness now, and the factors likely to impact on future levels of homelessness, through accurate profiling of the area
- Ensure that there is sufficient accommodation available for people who are, or may become, homeless
- Provide services that help to prevent people from becoming homeless.
- This will include a review of their effectiveness and the identification of new opportunities to support prevention of homelessness
- Ensure that through effective partnership, working support services can be accessed for those people who are, or who may become, homeless – or who need support to prevent them from becoming homeless again
- Promote a cultural change so that homelessness is viewed in a wider context than just lack of accommodation

This strategy aims to build on the achievements from our 2017-22 Joint Homelessness Strategy as well as to address the changing landscape of homelessness and housing need across our area. It has been developed at a time of considerable uncertainty, with the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on our communities still not fully understood the strategy has been designed to respond flexibly to the changing housing landscape.

The powerful community response to the pandemic brought with it stronger professional relationships and increased focus on the importance of partnership working. Whilst the responsibility for the Homelessness Strategy rests with South Hams District and West Devon Borough Council, it also aims to bring together all partner agencies to ensure a holistic approach toward addressing homelessness.

The areas of South Hams and West Devon are among some of the most beautiful in the country. Featuring areas of outstanding natural beauty and large swathes of Dartmoor, both areas are highly sought after for those wishing to live in and enjoy the beautiful surroundings. Much of our industry is centred on tourism and we have high proportions of holiday and second home accommodations in many of our towns and villages. Whilst this has always been the case, the Covid 19 pandemic has brought with it increased interest in the area for stay-cation holidays, second home ownership and permanent relocation from cities; with the new opportunities

presented by home working. The result has been a sharp increase in house prices and in properties being used as holiday rentals rather than as long term rented housing.

ONS data revealed that in the 12 months leading up to December 2021 the south west experienced the highest rental increases along with West Midlands of 3.1%. In the three months to August 2021, RICS reported that tenant demand was accelerating while landlord instructions remained in decline.

The fall in supply of lettings was most widespread in the Midlands, the East of England and the South West (ONS).

The increase in rental prices and property prices has priced many low income families out of both the homeownership and the private rented market. The South Hams and West Devon Housing strategy 2021 -2026 identifies in details the ways in which South Hams and West Devon will work towards increasing property across all markets.

The pandemic also had significant financial impacts including decreased income under the furlough scheme and changes to benefits that has impacted on people's ability to manage their finances.

This has sharply emphasised the challenges for many people across our area and may lead to further increases in homelessness in our area.

The Strategic Context

The South Hams and West Devon Homelessness Strategy has been developed in response to a number of legal duties and powers and with regard to a both national and local policy. It has also been important to recognise the impact of Covid and the UK's exit from the European Union; which has been significant in the area and will continue to impact on people's lives over the coming five years.

Legal Framework

- Housing Act 1996 (as amended) - Part 7 of the 1996 Housing Act is still the overarching piece of legislation used by councils in determining the way in which they respond to homelessness. The Act has been amended by:
 - The Homelessness Act 2002, which has included notable changes in the way Councils use temporary accommodation, with greater emphasis on the role of prevention.
 - The Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 which imposed new legal duties on councils so that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness will have access to support, irrespective of their priority need status, as long as they are eligible for assistance.
- The Care Act 2014 - The Care Act set a strong expectation that agencies would work together to protect children, young adults and people with care and support needs,
- Rough Sleeper Strategy 2018- This new requirement made it a statutory duty to review and publish a plan designed specifically to meet the needs of Rough Sleepers.
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021 – designed to address the needs of victims of domestic abuse, the act imposes a duty on upper tier local authorities to provide support in safe accommodation.
- Warm Homes and Energy Conservation Act 2000 (as amended) – secondary legislation; Fuel Poverty (England) Regulations 2014 set out a fuel poverty target – to ensure as many

fuel poor homes as is reasonably practicable achieve a minimum energy rating of Band C by 2030.

Regional Picture

South Hams and West Devon

- South Hams District Council Corporate Strategy – Better Lives For All 2021-2041
- West Devon Borough Council Corporate Strategy – A Plan for West Devon 2021-2041
- Joint Local Plan 2014-2034
- Better Homes, Better Lives - South Hams and West Devon Housing Strategy 2021-2026
- South Hams and West Devon Tenancy Strategy 2021

The two corporate strategies, Better Lives for All and A Plan for West Devon address the distinct needs of both authorities and frame the council's vision for both areas and for the Council as an organisation. Both strategies include Homes as a key priority, with the delivery of these priorities being further developed within the South Hams and West Devon Housing Strategy. The key themes for the South Hams and West Devon Housing strategy are:

- Housing for Place – Driving the delivery of new homes that people can afford and meeting the different needs of our communities
- Housing For People – Ensure the best use and improved quality of existing housing.

Devon County

- Happy and Healthy Communities, Devon's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020-25
- Promoting Independence in Devon, 5 Year Plan for Adult Social Care 2018-23
- Children's Services Improvement Plan 2020
- Healthy Lives, Vibrant Communities, Housing Choices, a Joint Strategic Approach to Supporting People to Live Independently in Devon 2020-25
- Domestic Abuse Support in Safe Accommodation in Devon (in consultation)

The importance of collaborative working practices has been a priority for many years, with the Covid-19 pandemic highlighting this further. Inequalities across the county have been accentuated further by the pandemic, with households in rural locations struggling to access services. The commitment to partnership working is central to the success of this Strategy and issues around housing and wellbeing remain central to both Devon County and 2nd tier local authority policy design and delivery.

Devon & Cornwall Housing Options Partnership

All Devon and Cornwall Authorities are committed to working together to improve the consistency and quality of housing options and advice services across the two counties. Held up nationally as an example of good partnership working, the partnership has enabled shared policy and practice development, while also yielding opportunities for Government funding in the form of grants for rough sleeping, debt advice, youth homelessness and working with the private sector.

Devon Homelessness Prevention Panel

All eight local authorities work alongside Devon County Children's Services to address the needs of young people entering and leaving the care system. Through our collaborative work we have developed a number of Joint Working Protocols to ensure best outcomes for young people facing homelessness.

The Local Picture

As of October 2021 there were 45,606 properties in South Hams and 26,297 in West Devon. Of the number in South Hams 3,455 were recorded as second homes and 46 empty for over 2 years. A further 73 are uninhabitable. In West Devon there are 538 second homes and 33 properties that have been empty for over 2 years. A further 27 are recorded as uninhabitable. (Source CTB1 October 2021)

In the three years to 2020 the population of South Hams increased by 2606 due to internal migrations with West Devon's population increasing by 810. Demographic projections suggest a 5% increase in population for the South Hams and 4% increase in West Devon. However these figures have not been updated since the pandemic (Source Devon County Council)

In the years 2016- 2021, the number of affordable homes delivered in South Hams was 615, and in West Devon this was 149

Average house price in South Hams is £440,139; a 25% increase since 2016 (Sept 2016 - £331,625) and the average house price in West Devon is £306,203; a 22% increase (Sept 2016 - £239,160) (Source - Land Registry 2020)

Average salary in South Hams £30,160 in 2020, an increase of 9% since 2016. In West Devon the average salary is 22,048, an increase of 11% since 2016. (Source: ONS 2020)

- Work in partnership with support services and achieve high referral rates between organisations to identify and address issues impacting on home management.
- Provide: to improve access to a range of accommodation and support options suitable for household needs.
 - Expand the existing portfolio of homes rented through SeaMoor Lettings
 - Develop housing management and development options to increase availability of housing.

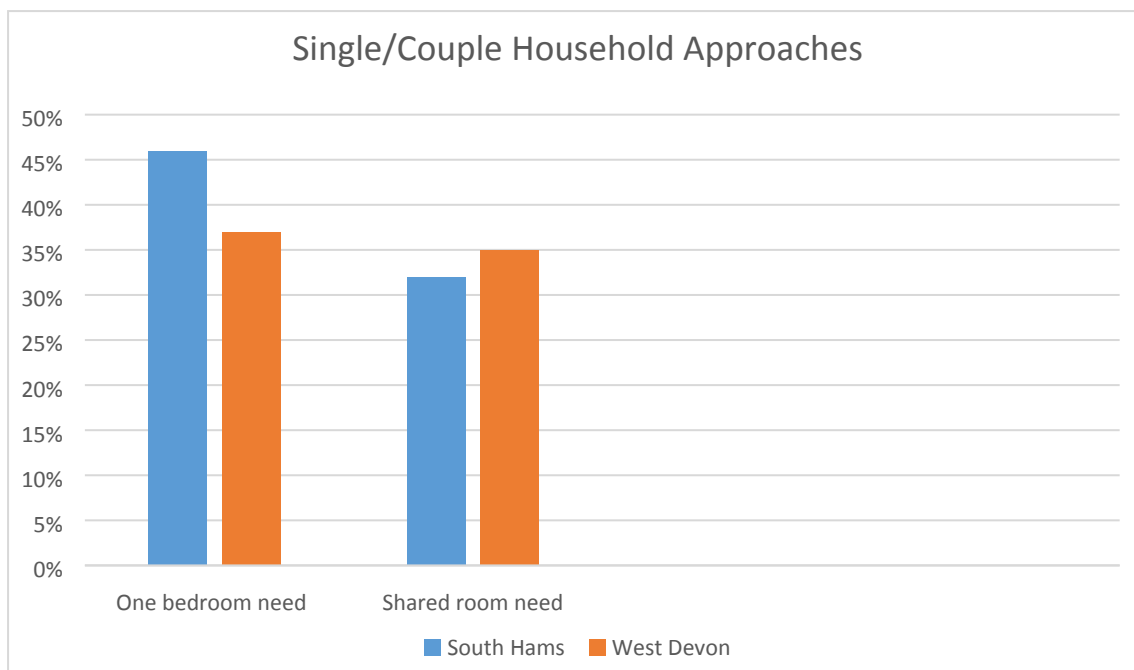
Key priority groups

To achieve our objectives we have recognised that housing and support options need to reflect the needs of the household to ensure positive outcomes are achieved and repeat homelessness is minimised. The review of homelessness in South Hams and West Devon has identified that four key groups of people for whom the experience of homelessness and the contributing factors are both complex and unique.

- Single households
- Families
- Households with additional needs
- Rough Sleepers

Whilst the experiences and causes of homelessness across these groups is known to overlap, in order to continue to build on the proven track record of prevention work; it is essential that we look to examine and understand the barriers each group experiences when facing a housing need, to ensure best outcomes. Working proactively with our partners we can ensure we are able to offer advice and services that are tailored to the needs of those approaching us.

Group 1: Singles and Couples requiring one bedroom or shared accommodation.



Of the 1914 approaches in South Hams and the 1159 approaches in West Devon between 2017-21; 78% and 75% respectively have been from households requiring one bedroom or shared accommodation.

For those requiring one bedroom accommodation the average case duration was 82 days.

Within the same time period 32% of approaches made to South Hams have been from those aged 18-34 years old; for whom the shared accommodation rate applies. In West Devon this figure was 38%. The main reason for approach within this age group was 'Asked to leave by friends or family' and 'Sofa Surfing'.

43% of one bedroom households in the South Hams secured housing outside the district. In West Devon 33% of one bed households were housed outside the borough. Of those single households who were housed in shared accommodation only 35% were able to source shared accommodation within the South Hams, with 59% successfully securing shared accommodation in West Devon.

To meet the needs of the people in this group we will:

Prevent - Ensure we increase awareness of services available to people looking to move on from or maintain existing accommodation; to include a provision designed for young people at risk of eviction from the family home.

Relieve - Work with partner agencies to deliver services which support young people facing homelessness

Sustain - Ensure access to good quality financial and independent living advice and support to ensure people are empowered to sustain their tenancies.

Provide - Work with landlords to increase the supply of shared and one bedroom affordable accommodation access the area. Develop a management service offer to increase provision of HMO accommodation across both areas.

Group 2: Families

Homeless children are more likely to experience stress and anxiety, resulting in depression and behavioural issues. There is evidence that the impact of homelessness on a child's health and development extends beyond the period of homelessness. (Crisis 2011)

Between 2017-21; in South Hams 427 families approached for assistance and 291 in West Devon. The primary reason for approach across both local authorities for families was 'receipt of a Section 21 notice' with the second most common reason being 'fleeing domestic abuse'.

On average it has taken more than 4 weeks longer to secure housing for families (average 113 days) than for those requiring one bedroom accommodation.

In the South Hams 76% of families successfully secured housing within the district of South Hams. In West Devon 63% families were housed within the borough.

To meet the needs of this group we will:

Prevent - Work with registered providers and private landlords to enable early identification of families at risk of homelessness to enable provision of appropriate support.

Relieve - Ensure our internal working practices and relationships with partner agencies are robust and that we collaborate effectively to support those facing homelessness and/or in temporary accommodation.

Sustain - Work proactively with landlords in both the private and social rented sector to ensure early identification of tenancy sustainment issues including financial issues.

Provide – using the Council's resources, increase the number of affordable private rented and council owned properties available to families, to include quality temporary housing. Maximise the number of properties made available as a result of successful downsizing in the social rented sector.

Group 3 Additional Needs

Many single homeless people experience support needs in addition to their immediate need for housing, including: physical ill health, mental health problems, drug and alcohol issues and multiple and complex needs (Crisis 2011)

Mental Health needs accounted for 54% of those identifying as having additional needs in South Hams and 50% in West Devon. 45% of households in South Hams identified a physical disability support need and 39% in West Devon. Other support needs identified include Drug and/or alcohol misuse, feeling abuse of violence and being a care leaver or young person made homeless.

99 households across the two areas identified themselves as having 3 or more support needs.

The Disabled facilities grants have successfully supported 334 households in South Hams and 182 households in West Devon to remain in their own home through provision of adaptations.

Since the establishment of the Disabled Adapted Panel has supported 50 households to secure appropriate adapted accommodation through targeted work with RP's on their housing stock as it becomes available.

As of September 2021 23 households in South Hams and 21 households in West Devon people still remain on the housing list in need of wheelchair adapted accommodation. A new project has commenced to identify and target those households with a need for other adaptations or specific accommodation types.

Over the three years to 2021 31% of households approaching in South Hams identified themselves as having additional support needs. In West Devon it was 29%.

To meet the needs of this group we will:

Prevent – work closely with partner agencies to ensure those in housing need are identified and referred to us quickly to enable early intervention measures can be put in place; including support to downsize or move to more suitable accommodation.

Relieve – ensure provision of quality temporary housing and access to support services to holistically address the needs of those facing homelessness

Sustain – Deliver an adaptation service to include grant and self funded support aids are made accessible for all. Ensure relevant services are identified and referred to for those requiring additional support to sustain their homes.

Provide – work with Devon County Council to support the delivery of housing for those with support needs through a property management service offer with intensive housing support.

Group 4 Rough sleepers

Qualitative research has shown that many single homeless people face significant challenges, which often involve adverse childhood experiences such as trauma, neglect and poverty. (Crisis)

Rough Sleepers

In South Hams 86 rough sleepers were worked with by South Hams, of these 60 identified as having rough slept previously and 9 individuals have had repeat cases with us. In West Devon there were 36 rough sleepers with 27 of these stating they had been homeless before and 4 individuals have had repeat cases.

Successful outcomes were recorded for 37 rough sleepers in the South Hams and for in 16 rough sleepers in West Devon.

Of the 86 rough sleepers approaching South Hams 54% identified themselves as having support needs with 36% identifying mental health as a specific need. In West Devon 40% of rough sleepers identified as having support needs with 27% specifying a physical disability as a support need.

In 2017 the government announced their target to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and ensure that no one has to sleep rough by 2024. This government target aligned with the local authorities commitment to work towards ending rough sleeping across both areas.

The council often has no legal duty to many of the people sleeping rough in the area and where a legal duty has existed due to either not meeting the vulnerability criteria required by the legislation or because they are deemed under law to be intentionally homeless. Historically this has limited the level of work and investment made in this cohort. Conversely living on the streets can create and exacerbate people’s vulnerabilities making investment in this cohort more essential:

Issue	Rough Sleepers	General Population
Life expectancy	Age 47	Age 77
Physical Health	78%	37%
Mental Health	44%	23%
Addiction	41%	Not shown

(Crisis)

Over the last 5 years we have seen a significant reduction in people sleeping rough in both South Hams and West Devon. However, in order to keep these numbers consistently low moving forward we need build on what we have achieved.

To meet the needs of this group we will:

Prevent - Work with partners to ensure early identification of Rough Sleepers or people at risk of rough sleeping.

Relieve - Continue our commitment to holistic outreach work and the No Second Night Out ethos.

Sustain - Provide intensive support both in house and with our partners for rough sleepers in accommodation to enable them to manage long term accommodation expectations.

Provide - Develop a range of accommodation and support options for people rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping to make long term accommodation sustainment realistic.

How the Homeless strategy and Delivery Plan will be monitored

The life of this homeless strategy is intended to be five years.

Annually we will publish our progress to date and a refreshed Action Plan. The development of each annual action plan shall include consultation with members and stakeholders to ensure that the strategy is kept relevant and that all partner agencies and local people, through their elected representatives, have the opportunity to help to develop and influence a holistic approach to tackling homelessness across the area.

The delivery of the Action Plan will rely on the resources of both Councils and their partners, working together to achieve positive outcomes, for people in South Hams and West Devon.

The Review of the 2017-22 Joint Homelessness Strategy Objectives and Outcomes

The 2017-22 Joint Homelessness Strategy set out the priorities for tackling homelessness in South Hams & West Devon. The strategy was framed around four themes:

- Understanding the true cost of homelessness
- Access to services
- Access to housing
- Health and wellbeing

A review of the progress made against these priorities has been conducted to support the development of the 2022-27 Homelessness Strategy.

Priority 1: Understanding the True Cost of Homelessness

Objectives	Outcomes
Ensure we establish a solid evidence base which informs practice across all sectors and clearly illustrates the true cost of homelessness in South Hams and West Devon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented a new bespoke housing system which enables cross examination of data collected from homeless applicants. • Data sharing agreements established with Children’s services and improved referral routes and working practices established to better track trends and identify need among care leavers and families.
Monitor the impact of welfare reform, and ensure that this informs future strategic priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of food banks has shown a steady rise in demand – referral routes established with food banks to ensure support services can be identified and offered to address the root causes of food poverty. • Support service provision increased to address the changing needs of those on low incomes in the face of the pandemic and furlough schemes.
Recognise the continuing pressures on the Councils’ budgets and how best to target resources in the most meaningful way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted partnership working practices with social landlords to ensure tenants with rent arrears are identified at an early stage and supported and homelessness prevented. • Bespoke financial advice service in place to ensure customers receive tailored advice and are supported to access services • Tenants incentive Scheme revised and regularly promoted to ensure best use of existing stock

Ensure partnerships with other agencies demonstrate value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing review with DCC regarding the supported Living contract. • Joint bid with TDC to secure funds for rough sleepers and 3 joint posts to ensure best Value for money
Ensure access to good quality financial advice to help tackle poverty, poor quality housing and homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procured a new contract with Homemaker to deliver Income Maximisation, budgeting, benefits and debt advice • Extended the contract to 5 days a week in response to the Covid Impact on people's finances.

Priority 2: Access to Services

Objectives	Outcomes
Offer advice and assistance in a range of formats, so the customer can choose how they communicate with their Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented bespoke online portal account system to facilitate communication and document sharing. • Expanded offer of telephone assessment services to ensure customers in remote locations are not required to travel to access services. • Updated and maintained web pages to ensure information is available in plain English and includes links to additional support resources • Worked closely with the Devon Home Choice partnership to enable more effective access to the Devon Home Choice system via an app designed specifically for phone us.
Ensure our most vulnerable customers are able to access advice services effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed close relationships with support services to ensure vulnerable customers are able to access support with making homeless applications. • Communication software technology ensure that calls and assessments with customers can include support workers or family members in the same call.
Work with partners to ensure that we are able to offer services at the time and place our customers need them most	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication software technology ensure that calls and assessments with customers can occur at a time and location that best suits the customer and their support network. • Training delivered to multiple partner agencies to ensure a good basic understanding of housing and homelessness exists across a wide range of agencies. Enabling basic advice and

	information to be sourced from a wide range of places and to ensure excellent referral routes where additional support and advice is needed.
Readily and regularly consult with our customers and stakeholders to make sure we get our services right	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly attending community groups including Caring Town, The Hub and ROOF. • Consult yearly with stakeholders on the progress of the strategy and the future needs for local housing. • Introduced a G&T Forum to engage with the Traveller communities to find out their needs and we can do to meet these.

Priority 3: Access to Housing

Objectives	Outcomes
Increase the supply, standard and options for people who face homelessness within our area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased promotion and communications program to support the recruitment of local landlords to the Seamoor property scheme. • Capital grant funding secured to enable purchase of 4 one bedroom homes to improve housing options for single homeless rough sleeping or at risk of. • Established Disabled Adaptation Panel which has been instrumental in securing the most appropriate housing options for those in need of adapted housing for XX households • Developed a bespoke website to advertise rented accommodation options through SeaMoor and part ownership housing options available locally. • Appointed a project officer to • Established a perpetrator housing programme to support victims of domestic abuse to remain in their own home and alternate housing be sought for the perpetrator.
Develop innovative options for our Rough Sleeper Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint bid with TDC to secure Outreach workers, personal budgets and housing first options. • Successfully implemented the TAS worker to help support rough sleepers with moving on • Successfully bid for funding for an additional support worker for the Leap Pad project

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully bid for £250K toward the purchase of 4 units of Leap Pad accommodation. • Improved communication and partnership working with Local Charities and 3rd sector organisations to ensure that a holistic approach is taken to meeting Rough Sleepers support and engagement needs.
Continue the downward use of temporary accommodation for homeless households	<p>The use of temporary accommodation has fluctuated throughout the 5 year strategy. Various elements have impacted on the success of this aim including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding was secured in 2019 for 2 temporary accommodation support (TAS) workers. The role was a success resulting in a reduction in temp costs of £28,900 • Funding ended for these roles in 2020 • The Covid pandemic has impacted on the availability of accommodation for applicants to move to resulting in longer stays in temp. This has been caused by a combination of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Delays in building development due to lockdown measures ○ Reduction in movement across the social and private housing sector due to a stay in evictions and a limitation on movements. ○ Demand for holiday accommodation in the district has led to an increase in use of rental accommodation for holiday use.

Priority 4: Health and Wellbeing

Objectives	Outcomes
Work in partnership with our voluntary and statutory sectors to holistically address people's needs as fully as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointed a dedicated Vulnerable Person's Officer and • Appointed 2 Rough sleeper outreach workers to work alongside our housing advice officers to facilitate excellent links to partner agencies to include joint working on homeless cases.
Ensure we adequately protect and safeguard the most vulnerable members of our community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed internal Safeguarding procedures and rolled out training to ensure safeguarding is 'Everyone's responsibility' • Developed good working relationships with Hospital discharge coordinators, prison release

	<p>officers, probation, domestic abuse, adult and children's social work and mental health.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged closely with children's services and contributed to the development of joint working protocols to ensure quality joint working. • Seconded a senior specialist on behalf of all Devon 2nd Tier local authorities to deliver targeted training and support to the Children's services' MASH team over the period of one year.
<p>Enable early help, to avoid crisis and tackle homelessness at its root cause.</p>	<p>Developed referral routes and delivered training in homelessness to ensure early identification of housing needs and risk of homelessness to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospital discharge coordinators, • prison release officers, • probation, • domestic abuse support services, • Adult and children's social work • Mental health social care, • Police • Registered providers

Rough Sleeper Strategy Review

Objectives	Outcomes
<p>Increase our knowledge of the number of people sleeping rough by building on the annually required rough sleepers estimate by introducing a quarterly rough sleeper estimate. This will ensure that the service delivery can respond more quickly to need.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced monthly rough sleeper counts/estimates • Introduced a next working day response to reports of people sleeping rough wherever possible.
<p>The very nature of homelessness means a large proportion of the people requiring housing advice and homeless services will be vulnerable and may need additional support to enable them to access services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced TAS worker • Introduced Outreach workers • Introduced specialist Drug and Alcohol Outreach workers • Introduced a multiagency hub, m
<p>Housing options for those with a history of rough sleeping need to be innovative and reflect the needs of the individual. The Local Authority seeks to achieve this</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced the Leap Pad (Housing First) accommodation model • Worked with Private Landlords to encourage them to accept tenants with a history of chaotic behaviour and rough sleeping

<p>through the provision of multiple housing options which will be tailored to meet the needs of the individual.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked with Social Landlords in line with the Where's Cathy ethos to encourage them to accept tenants with a history of chaotic behaviour and rough sleeping •
<p>Tackling homelessness takes more than just the provision of a house, if we are to maximise the opportunities for our most vulnerable people. Often, poor health, addictions and unhealthy lifestyles mean that people are unable to secure, and maintain, accommodation for themselves or their families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed a multi-agency hub in partnership with TDC comprised of outreach workers, a hub coordinator, drug and alcohol support services, MH services, probation and adult social care to ensure that all potential solutions are considered around the clients support needs and to ensure a client centred approach to developing those plans.