

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2015 to 2020 Updated November 2018

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Reinforce the corporate commitment to the National Practitioner Standard for Homelessness across the Council's services	To confirm Council's commitment to the Standard	Approval of the Homelessness Strategy by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Cabinet	Cabinet and SLT	The Standard cannot be met if this commitment is not made	The National Practitioner Standard for Homelessness challenge on the corporate commitment to homelessness was achieved in 2016.
Consult the National Practitioner Team on how to achieve the Standard, which includes conducting a peer review of the homelessness service and achieving the ten Standard challenges.	To highlight areas where improvement is required and enable the Council to meet the Standard	Pass with 60% the peer review exercise with other local authorities and complete the submission of evidence for the ten challenges	Housing options team; appointed consultant; other local authorities; stakeholder agencies	That the Standard is not reached and that service requirements are below that of other Surrey local authorities	The peer review was completed with a 72% score in 2015. The Gold Standard was achieved in June 2018.

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<p>Ensure that there is a robust plan in place for the implementation of Universal Credit. This will cover: how we support people to apply for benefits; arrangements for monitoring Universal Credit payments and the rent contribution; how to arrange for housing payments to be paid to direct to landlords; and knowledge on how to help households apply for a range of benefits</p>	<p>To minimise the impact of welfare reform on the most vulnerable and have a planned approach with the HomeChoice Plus scheme</p>	<p>Making contact with local links within the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to ensure simple easy dialogue and communication on vulnerable cases</p>	<p>Housing Options, DWP and Housing Benefit</p>	<p>Rent arrears could accrue; financial hardship could occur; landlords through the HomeChoice Plus service could be lost and homelessness could occur</p>	<p>Housing staff have received training on this. Private sector landlords have also received information at the landlords' forum from the DWP on Universal Credit. The roll out of Universal Credit has been slow and subsequent actions have been delayed. It is now due to go live on all new cases from 24 October 2018. A further private rented sector landlord seminar on the subject is planned for 29 November 2018.</p>

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Licensing and accreditation of private rented sector landlords	To ensure good quality private rented sector provision within Mole Valley and elsewhere and ensure a professional HomeChoice Plus service	Consider schemes already in place both locally and nationwide to affiliate too; consult with the landlords forum regarding this.	Housing Options, Environmental health, local landlords	The HomeChoice Plus scheme becomes stagnant and poor quality private rented accommodation is allowed to occur	This action has been put on hold, as we have been concentrating on supporting landlords with legislative changes which have affected this sector, such as welfare reform and requirements on landlords such as right to rent.
Implement Local Pad software	To update our private rented sector landlord and property database and provide a forum for local landlords	On receipt of development timetable and demonstration system share with landlord focus group before full implementation	Housing options	Rent deposit bond and rent in advance information is subject to inaccuracies. Gas safety certificates are not highlighted as needing to be renewed.	Local Pad has been installed and launched for private sector landlords in 2015

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Ensure that clients are referred to support services.	To ensure clients benefit from a range of services that may meet their needs	Staff to be aware of all services and how to make referrals	Housing options	Clients are not supported and may fail in accommodation and become homeless	All clients have support needs identified at housing options interviews and through continuing case work. Referrals are then made to appropriate agencies. This is monitored through case work meetings and 1-2-1s with staff
To monitor and promote the use of the Housing Options Wizard (HOW)	To ensure clients make maximum use of the wizard to help prevent homelessness early	Promote from time to time on the Council's website and newsletter	Housing options	Clients delayed in seeking advice	Ongoing throughout the strategy period. Adapt the HOW and provide more detailed information based on individuals' circumstances would require additional cost and this needs to be assessed.

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Ensure that all clients have a written summary of the advice they are given	To ensure all clients receive clear understandable advice	Staff to be trained on how to incorporate this practice in their day to day work	Housing options	Clients forget the advice they have been given by the Council and are unclear of their rights	This is both available following an initial housing options interview as well as through the HOW online. This is monitored through Staff 1-2-1s.
Seek to adopt a no second night out approach to rough sleepers within Mole Valley by writing a new policy and reconnection criteria	To ensure that no household has to spend a second night on the streets and meet the Standard	Write a new policy in conjunction with the Surrey- wide re-connection policy developed by Guildford and already in operation.	Housing Options; Other Surrey authorities; Pitstop; Leatherhead Start; Health; local hostel and supported housing providers; Respond; Catalyst	That an individual could become entrenched in rough sleeping and suffer a deterioration in health	Through the East Surrey Outreach Service (eSOS) this has been adopted and we have also adopted a reconnection policy. We have achieved the Gold Standard requirement on this challenge.

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Ensure that vulnerable clients housed in supported accommodation have a housing pathway	To ensure that vulnerable care leavers have a pathway that will allow them to succeed in living in independent accommodation	Improve procedures to ensure a pathway is included for all cases	Housing options and partner agencies	That vulnerable clients fail when housed in independent accommodation and become homeless	Completed
Provide a 'flat mate' function through our HomeChoice internet pages to help single people and couples to find rooms to rent within and outside the district	Increase the availability and ease of access for single people and couples to find affordable accommodation in Mole Valley in the private sector	Develop Localpad to include a flatmate search option	Housing Options	That non statutory homeless households have limited housing options available to them and become homeless	October 2018 – this action has been delayed due to our wish for the implementation of Universal Credit for single people to be more bedded in before we introduce these clients to landlords within the HomeChoice scheme.

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Signpost clients facing mortgage repossession to the Getwise service, CAB for money advice and other appropriate support services	To help prevent repossession	Ensure staff know how to refer to these services	Housing options	Risk of repossession	Getwise has ended and all clients are referred to CAB for money advice (whether relating to mortgages or other financial problems)
Refer clients facing mortgage repossession to government schemes available	To help prevent repossession	Ensure staff know how to refer staff to these services	Housing options	Risk of repossession	October 2018 – There are no current government schemes in operation, however we do work with clients to relieve and prevent their mortgage issues through discussions with mortgage providers and other housing options. We have passed the Gold standard on this matter.

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Negotiate with mortgage lenders to prevent homelessness where possible	To help prevent repossession	Ensure staff know how to refer staff to these services	Housing options	Risk of repossession	October 2018 – We work with clients to relieve and prevent their mortgage issues through discussions with mortgage providers and other housing options. This has been passed through the Gold standard.
The Homelessness Strategy to be reviewed annually by the Scrutiny Committee.	To ensure the Homelessness Strategy is delivered	Report progress annually to the Scrutiny Committee	Housing Options Manager	The Standard and strategy actions are not achieved	Ongoing - The former Executive approved the strategy in 2015 and the Scrutiny Committee reviewed it after the first six months and in November 2016 and 2017. Last review was November 2018

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
<p>To ensure where possible that bed and breakfast accommodation is not used for 16 or 17 year olds and that emergency beds through Surrey County Council and Surrey nightstop are fully utilized.</p>	<p>To ensure 16 and 17 year olds are not inappropriately housed in bed and breakfast</p>	<p>Work with partners and ensure the multi-agency panel meets to make best use of the accommodation available for young people</p>	<p>Housing options</p>	<p>Young people are inappropriately accommodated</p>	<p>Throughout the strategy period to date no 16/17 year olds have been placed in bed and breakfast. The Gold standard challenge was achieved on this action in 2016.</p>
<p>Complete the acquisition of additional self contained emergency accommodation units</p>	<p>To prevent the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless households with a priority need</p>	<p>Purchase properties on the open market</p>	<p>Housing Options and Property team</p>	<p>Households will need to be placed in bed and breakfast accommodation until alternative accommodation is available in the private rented sector or in Council managed emergency housing.</p>	<p>Eight properties have been acquired and two existing corporate properties have been converted for emergency accommodation. The acquisition programme is completed.</p>

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Look to source nightly stay and bed and breakfast placements in Mole Valley or the surrounding areas	To restrict the need for the use of bed and breakfast accommodation outside the district	Contact local providers in Mole Valley and discuss availability, provision and requirements. Work with other Surrey local authorities to identify providers	Housing options and other Surrey authorities	Households are placed in bed and breakfast or nightly stay accommodation outside the district and away from support networks	Ongoing – since the inception of the action plan we have worked with one provider within the district however there are no cooking facilities.
Ensure that no household with dependent children is in bed and	To provide options for prevent the breaching the Suitability of	Source greater numbers of nightly stay to all suitable clients into the private rented Council owned by weekly reports to the		breach of the Suitability of	During the financial year no households out of those placed who have been in bed and breakfast for over 6 weeks

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Develop an average of 50 new affordable homes per year	To ensure that there is a flow of new affordable homes to prevent bottle necks of households waiting for accommodation	Work with local housing associations to enable new homes and provide financial investment where needed	Strategic Housing Manager	Stagnation of the social housing and emergency accommodation and inevitable use of bed and breakfast if homelessness prevention measures have been exhausted	Ongoing - 40 affordable homes completed in 2017/18 & 41 in 2018/19
Assist those affected by the spare room subsidy to find lodgers through advice on advertising of rooms available	To prevent financial hardship to those households affected by this welfare reform whilst also assisting non priority households with accessing lodgings	Consider development of LocalPad to allow advertisement of rooms to let; promote HomeChoice Plus to these potential landlords.	Housing options	Financial hardship is caused to those affected by the spare room subsidy, leading to rent arrears and homelessness; non-priority households have fewer housing options available to access	October 2018 – this action has been delayed due in order to complete the gold standard. The delay has also been due to waiting for Universal Credit for single people to be bedded in before using the HomeChoice scheme.

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
<p>Work closely with Leatherhead Pitstop to provide a short term directed and focused service to those homeless or socially excluded service users and to reconnect to areas where a local connection is held</p>	<p>To ensure that the service does not lead to an increase in homelessness within Mole Valley and helps individuals to move on and ensure that service users are reconnected to areas where they have a local connection and are able to access the most amount of services. To prevent service users to Pitstop rough sleeping in the Mole Valley area.</p>	<p>Write a new policy in conjunction with the Surrey- wide re-connection policy developed by Guildford and already in operation. Offer training opportunities to Pitstop staff to ensure understanding of options and housing / homelessness issues</p>	<p>Housing Options, Pitstop, Other Surrey authorities; Leatherhead Start; Health; local hostel and supported housing providers; Respond; Catalyst</p>	<p>Pitstop becomes an organisation where homeless individuals congregate and do not progress into accommodation. That service users of Pitstop rough sleep in Mole Valley. That option available from the areas that they have a local connection are not accessed and utilised.</p>	<p>The Pitstop was unable to find suitable premises and the trustees of the charity decided in 2016 not to continue its activities. This action is no longer relevant.</p>

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Speak with local banks regarding the possibility of ring fencing monies for rent once Universal Credit begins	To minimise the effect of welfare reforms such as Universal Credit for households who need assistance with budgeting and to give greater security to landlords within the private rented sector	Visit local banks and discuss ways of referring and assisting clients set up jam jar accounts.	Housing Options	That Universal Credit leaves households with budgeting problems in financial hardship and that rent is not paid leading to homelessness	October 2018 - The roll out of Universal Credit has been slow and subsequent actions have been delayed. Discussions will be held with the CAB regarding this action.
Consider closer links with the Surrey Credit Union	To ensure effects of welfare reforms are minimised for households at risk of loan sharks. To investigate the use of jam jar accounts	Discussions with Surrey Credit Union regarding referrals for clients	Housing Options and Surrey Credit Union	That households borrow money from other sources at high interest rates and suffer financial hardship	October 2018 – Meetings occurred with Surrey Credit Union however they have moved their focus towards loans rather than jam jar and simple accounts. This action is no longer being pursued.

ADDITIONAL ACTIONS - PEER REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS					
ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Annually conduct a review of service costs compared to the rest of Surrey	To ensure that service costs are monitored and comparisons made with other Surrey authorities	Compare figures on B&B expenditure; salary levels; rent deposit and rent in advance spend with other Housing Options Managers	Housing Options	That service costs are unchecked and put the Council at financial risk	This is updated each financial year end
Ensure all appropriate funding streams are investigated on an ongoing basis to assist in homelessness prevention services	To maximise funding opportunities for the service	Monitor grants and funds available throughout the year from various sources	Strategic Housing manager	That non statutory services are left without funding and therefore need to end	Ongoing projects such as eSOS may require additional funding and will be applied for when available.
Ensure MVDC's corporate service standards are available on the housing section of the website	To give transparency to the public and other agencies	Add a page to the Council's website within Housing to highlight service standards and monitor progress against these standards	Affordable Housing Officer and Housing Options Manager	That the service does not perform to the expected standard and is unmonitored	Available through the Customer Care pages of the Council's website which is more appropriate than on the housing pages

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Introduce an annual Homelessness Forum for stakeholders	To update stakeholders on current performance against the homelessness strategy and receive support on actions where appropriate and feedback	An annual meeting	Housing Options Manager and stakeholder agencies	That stakeholders are unaware of the strategy and work of the service and do not engage with actions	October 2018 – This will be introduced at the beginning of next financial year when the new Homelessness Strategy process is launched.
Consider implementing a system with the Customer Services Unit (CSU) to monitor time spent for Housing Options clients from arrival to being seen in reception.	To ensure that good customer service is provided	Investigate system requirements and possibilities for monitoring this	CSU, IT and Housing Options	Clients to the service are waiting unacceptable periods of time to be seen by housing officers without managers being aware	October 2018 - There is no viable way of consistently monitoring this action. This action is no longer being pursued.
Advise customers of Wi-Fi ability to be able to self investigate options before, during and after interviews	To facilitate Housing Clients investigating their options on their portable devices whilst in the building	WiFi sign in reception	CSU	Clients are unable to promptly respond to options discussed	This action has been implemented

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Ensure all staff receive regular interview refresher training and updates on Housing options and homelessness legislation and case law	To ensure that staff are legally informed and updated and that skills are updated regularly	Internal and external training through various agencies including NPSS	Housing Options Manager	Officer skills reduce; poor advice or options given;	Ongoing – an annual update on case law and legislation is received by staff through team training sessions and reading publications.
Ensure all case files are consistently dealt with by officers with full interview notes and enquiries made within service guidelines	To ensure that all cases are consistently dealt with and able to be picked up by any given officer. To ensure that enquiries and decisions are made promptly to prevent homelessness and establish statutory responsibilities	Regular file reviews both at 1-2-1's and at case closure by senior officer	Housing Options Officers and Housing Options Manager	Team resilience diminishes to cover case work in officer absence. Homelessness increases where prompt enquiries not made. Bed and Breakfast costs increase due to time delays in decision making	October 2018 – all housing options cases are monitored through 1-2-1's to ensure that interview notes are fully completed and up to date.

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Ensure that risk is always assessed for any applicant approaching due to violence or previous threats of violence	To manage risk and safeguard Housing (and other Council) officers	Officers to regularly check alerts on Abrisas and update where required. Officers to be aware and use the soon to be implemented Council wide Clients of Concern list	Housing Options team, Paul Holliday	That staff are placed in situations of risk with clients without adequate safeguards	Ongoing. As well as marking on our housing system where there are risks posed from clients, there is also a corporate client database which staff can access. Staff are aware of the violence at work procedure and when to use it.
Ensure applicants goals and preferred options are included on initial assessment form.	To understand and manage customer expectations whilst attempting to meet the desired outcomes	Additional field added to initial assessment form	Housing Options	That clients aspirations are not met, understood or managed and that complaints arise from staff not meeting clients expectations	Completed. This is now part of the initial housing options form and is monitored at 1-2-1 meetings

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Consider a marketing strategy for housing options service	To promote the work of the team and reach out to a wider clients base who we may then prevent from becoming homeless	Promotional posters in stakeholder agencies and adverts in journals or papers	Housing Options Manager and Communications Team	That households are unaware of our service at an early stage and therefore only approach when in crisis. Homelessness prevention opportunities are missed and bed and breakfast accommodation usage increase	An article has been included in the Mole Valley newsletter and will be repeated from time to time.
Review and update the customer feedback process	To obtain feedback on the service to monitor customer satisfaction and to guide and influence service improvements	Investigate web based feedback options (ie. Survey monkey)	Housing Options Manager, CSU	Lack of knowledge on the customer experience prevents service improvements occurring and leads to increase in complaints	October 2018 - Ongoing Although the Customer Excellence programme is no longer being pursued the Housing team will continue to investigate different customer feedback processes in the coming year

ACTION	PURPOSE	HOW	BY WHO?	RISK	TARGET DATE
Review existing service level agreements and identify where new service level agreements are needed with partners	To ensure that all Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are relevant and highlight gaps where SLAs are required	where SLA is required; review those in place and enter into not present to put these in		Joint working becomes based on personal rather than procedures and leave these sever and service delivery	October 2018 All SLAs are reviewed during written when
Review the framework structure and procedure around Housing options	To identify and gaps in our structure and look at where	structure from within the Gold process to compare and look to areas of good Consider the		The framework clear concise structure to enable case work to be undertaken and purpose. Clients gaps in the	October 2018 This has been reviewed since of the Reduction Act largely by the monitoring tool known as H-CLIC