



Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

2019- 2023

1 Introduction

The Council has a [duty](#) to publish a homelessness strategy based on a review of homelessness in the area.

For the strategy to be effective it should be aligned with other local plans and be developed with the support of other Council departments and wider partners. This will ensure that work in the Borough to tackle homelessness does so by addressing a wide range of factors that contribute to homelessness rather than narrowly focusing on 'housing' issues.

The review we have completed gives us an evidence base to inform our direction and this strategy sets out our approach.

The strategy is underpinned by an action plan that details the work we will do to tackle homelessness and the resources we have to do this work. The action plan has shared ownership with those partners working with us.

Over the period of this strategy we will review the effectiveness of our approach and our response to new challenges and opportunities. The action plan will be updated annually.

The Governments Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out a target to introduce regulation to require local authorities to produce a Rough Sleeping Strategy by December 2019. As we have been working on this area of activity we have included our response to rough sleeping in this Strategy.

1.1 A review of homelessness

We have looked at level of homelessness, considered who becomes homeless, looked at the things that lead to homelessness both directly (e.g. being served notice) and indirectly (e.g. debt, ill health) and the service and accommodation options available to both prevent homelessness and support those who do become homeless.

When we are talking about people who are homeless we are not just looking at those people who are actually sleeping rough. Homelessness has a much wider definition and can affect many in our community. It includes people whose home is not suitable because of disrepair, risk of violence, affordability, overcrowding, health or disability issues, or because they have been served notice.

1.2 Formulating our approach

Our strategy looks at how we can:

- Prevent homelessness in the Borough;
- Secure that sufficient accommodation is, and will be, available for residents who are or may become homeless; and,
- Secure that support is available to those who are homeless, at risk of becoming homeless or have been homeless and need support to prevent it happening again.

For each identified area of activity we set out the evidence from our review (*what we know*), the work that has and is happening (*what we have done*) and our ambition over the term of this strategy to further develop services to tackle homelessness (*what we will do*).

1.3 Delivering our Services

The homelessness legislation is set out in [Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 AS amended](#) and this provides the strategic framework for the work we do.

There have been a number of amendments to the legislation increasing the duties of local authorities. Most recently the [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#) significantly reformed the legislation by placing duties to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness, and to provide homelessness services to all homeless people not just those deemed to be in 'priority need'.

Specific timetables are placed around the help people can now expect including duties to 'prevent' homelessness for those who are threatened with homelessness within 56 days, and further 56 day duty to try to 'relieve' homelessness for those who are actually homeless. For those who do not fall into this group there is still a general duty to ensure advice is available to people in the Borough who have a housing problem.

Everyone owed one of these duties is given a Personal Housing Plan (PHP). This sets out both what the Council will do and what they should do to resolve their housing situation.

It has long been recognised that early intervention can prevent homelessness and the Council's message to residents and the agencies that work in the community has always been 'talk to us early'. The Homelessness Reduction Act is partly in response to those authorities who have not worked with people in this way, sending them away until they are actually roofless.

It has also always been our ambition to assist those that are not in 'priority need', generally these are single people who when they are homeless do not have to be provided accommodation. Since 1997 the Council has run 'Rent Choice', a scheme providing upfront money to secure a home in the private sector, and this has always been available to single people. The Homelessness Reduction Act is partly in response to those authorities who turned these people away with no practical help.

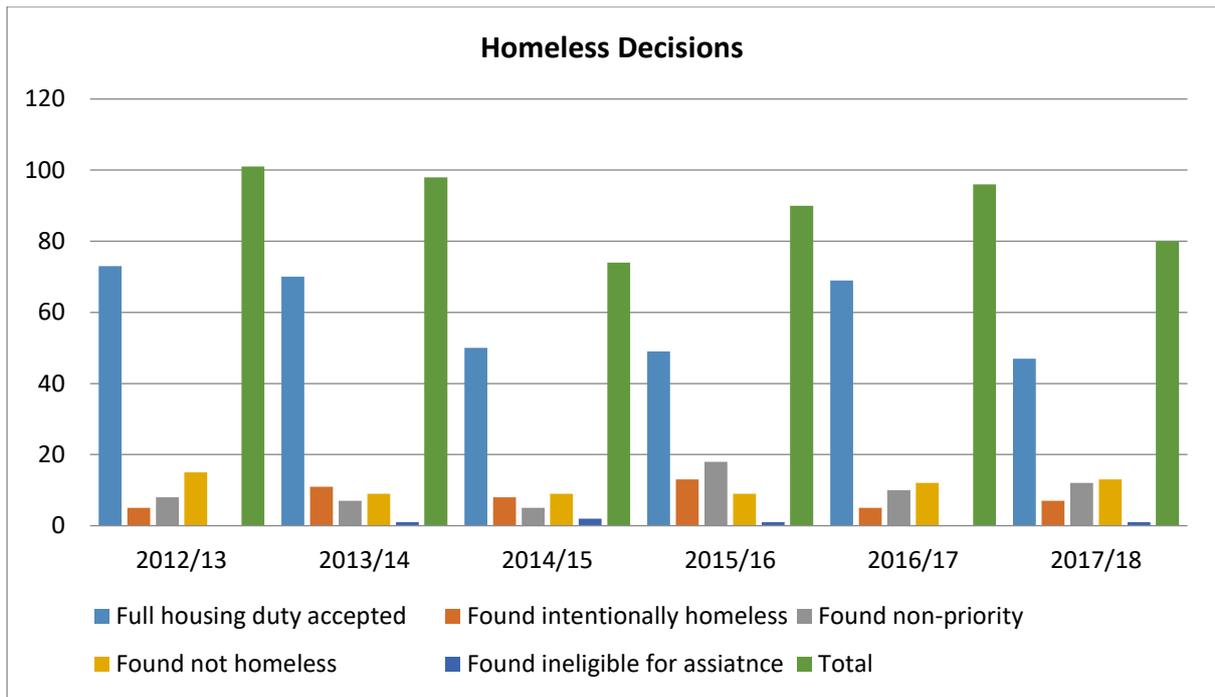
The premise of the legislation is therefore one with which we agree and have worked towards: early intervention and homeless prevention services and support for all. The disappointment with the Act is that it now imposes a very bureaucratic system on the work we do and additional resources both in terms of staff and funding have been needed to meet these requirements.

1.4 Homelessness in Surrey Heath

Looking at who we work with, we record all those households who approach us as homeless and for whom a decision is made. The decisions that can be made are:

- a full housing duty is owed and that household will be housed by the Council until settled housing is found;
- the applicant is intentionally homeless i.e. they did something to cause their homelessness so there is a not a duty to provide housing but advice and assistance is offered;
- the applicant in non-priority which means that they don't have children and are not vulnerable in some way so there is a not a duty to provide housing but advice and assistance is offered; or,
- the applicant is found not homeless i.e. they can remain in their home; or, found ineligible i.e. certain people from abroad who do not qualify for help from the Council.

The chart below shows the number of decisions we have taken over the period of our previous strategy.

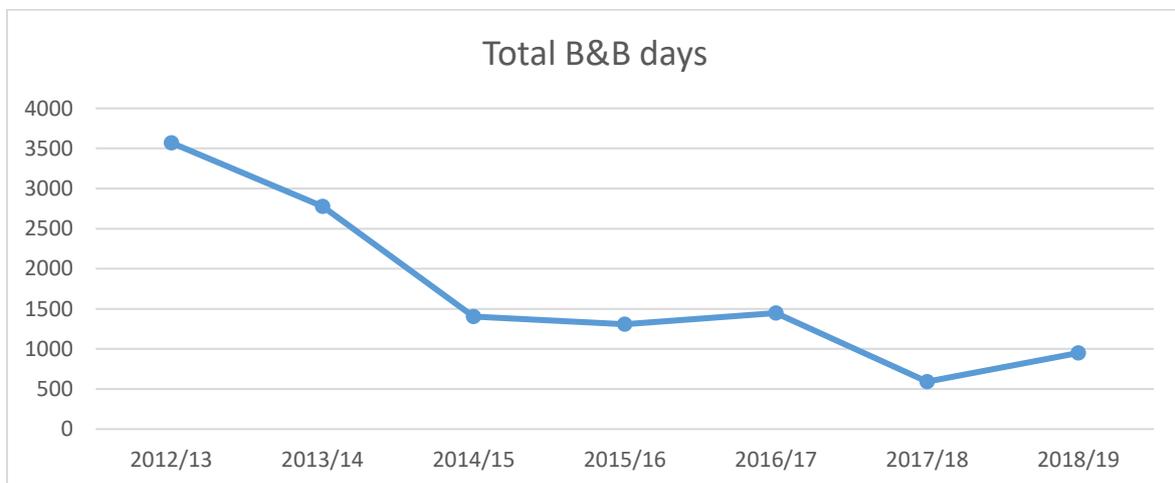


Due to the change in legislation we cannot directly compare our work in 2018/19, however during the year 27 households were accepted as having a full duty, 7 found intentionally homeless and 49 found non-priority.

In total in the first 12 months of the Homelessness Reduction Act the Housing Solutions Team worked with 355 households.

Often the only response we have to emergency homelessness is bed and breakfast accommodation. We recognise that is not ideal for either families with children or for residents who are vulnerable in some way as it is out of area and usually has shared facilities.

The chart below shows our B&B usage over the period of our last Homelessness Strategy in which we have sought to reduce the use of this accommodation. It is measured in 'bed and breakfast days'. This is the total number of days we had households in B&B and is calculated by adding those days together (so 5 families in B&B for 5 days each = 25 B&B days).



As well as the social cost of placing households in B&B there is a financial cost to the Council and the table below shows our expenditure on B&B over the last 7 years. The actual cost is arrived at by taking the rent charged to households in bed and breakfast, including any help they have from Housing Benefit, away from the actual charge made by B&B proprietors.

B&B costs	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Full cost	£176,689	£171,760	£79,654	£92,550	£94,073	£47,726	£75,430
Income	£72,231	£62,676	£35,952	£37,485	£36,463	£23,259	£37,681
Actual cost	£104,458	£109,084	£43,702	£55,065	£57,610	£24,467	£37,749

2 Tackling the causes of homelessness

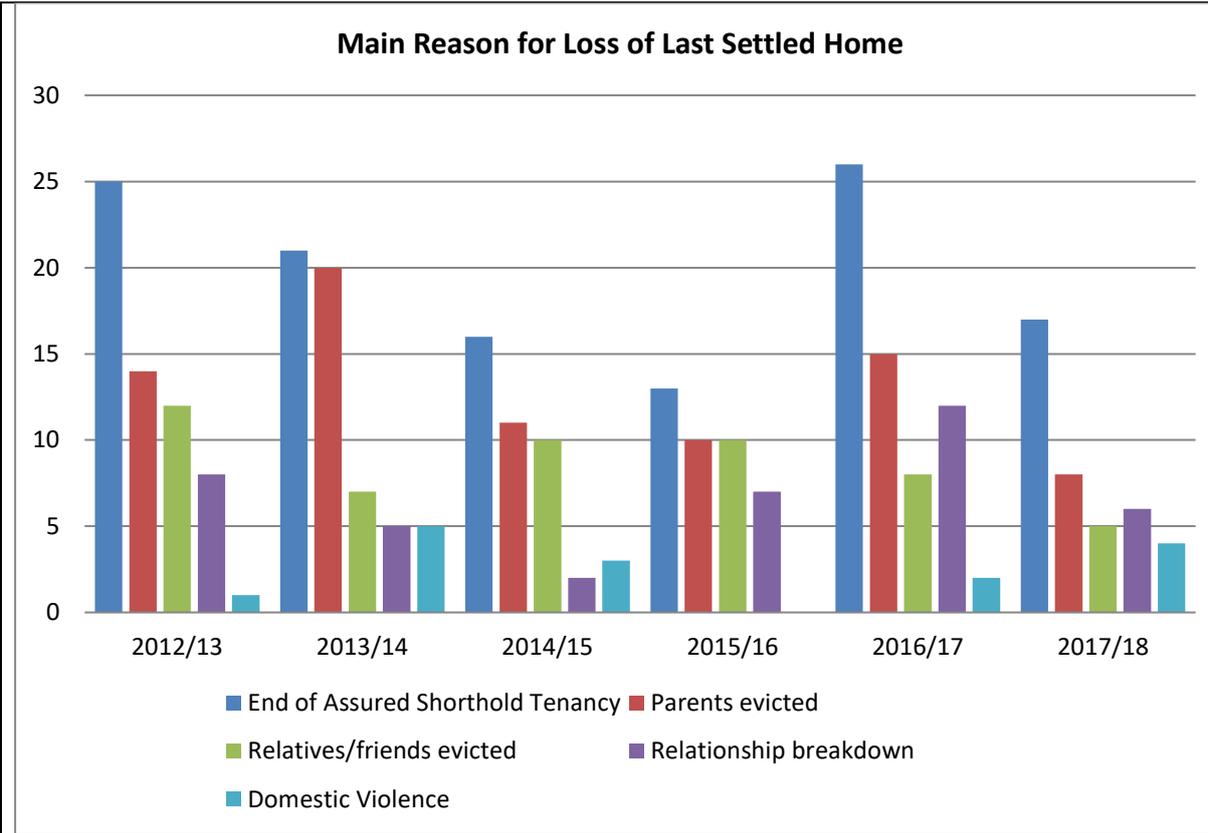
What we know

Data collection for Government has recently changed and in the future will give us more detail about who becomes homeless and the reasons behind why they become homeless.

The statistics available until April 2018 record headline figures and we have used these to direct where resources should be focused. Some sense checking has been carried out against activity in 2018/19 but the changes to legislation mean the data does not directly correspond with collection from previous years.

For those people for whom we accepted a full housing duty we record the reason that they lost their last settled home.

The chart below shows the main reasons for the loss of the last settled home over the period of the previous strategy.



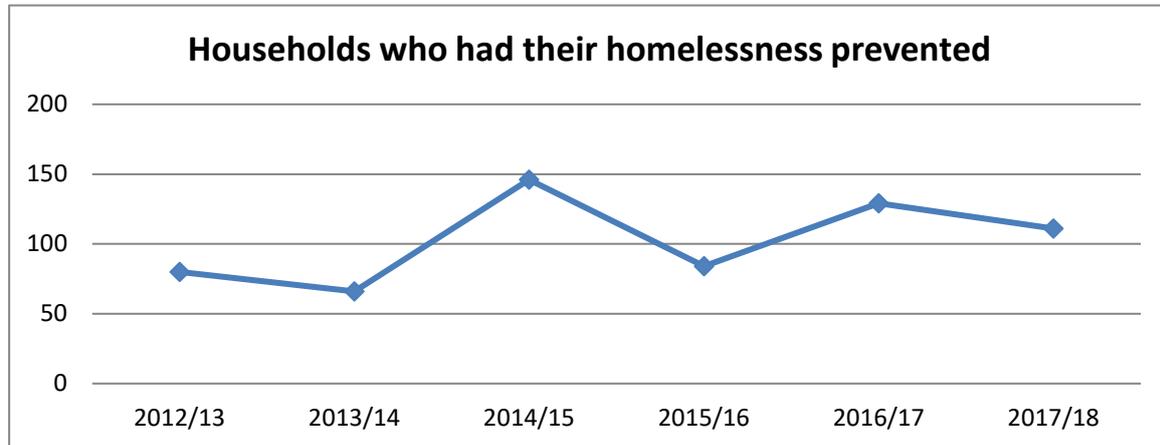
The other reasons people lost their homes are set out in the table below.

Loss	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Other violence	0	1	0	0	0	1
Other harassment	0	1	0	0	0	1
Mortgage arrears	4	0	0	1	0	0
Social rent arrears	0	0	1	0	0	0
Private rented arrears	2	4	1	0	1	1
Other private tenancy reason	0	0	1	1	1	0
From hospital	0	1	0	0	0	1
From other institution	0	0	0	2	1	0
From the Armed Forces	3	0	0	0	0	0
Other reason	4	5	5	5	3	3

What we have done

Since 2002 we have had a succession of homelessness strategies with a focus on preventing homelessness and helping people move in a planned way. This has been achieved through a number of project-based initiatives and the individual work that Case Officers carry out with residents at risk of homelessness.

The chart below sets out of success over the period of the previous strategy in preventing homelessness.



We are part of the National Practitioner Participation Service's [Gold Standard Programme](#). This is a peer review scheme designed to support delivery of more effective and efficient homelessness prevention services. The Gold Standard started with a peer review which we passed allowing us to start applying for each of 10 Local Challenges. To date we have applied for the challenge in relation not placing any young person aged 16-17 in bed and breakfast accommodation, which we successfully demonstrated compliance with, earning us the Bronze Standard Award.

We have increased the staff team using external funding to provide additional support to residents with a housing problem and better integrated the work we do in improving housing conditions in the private sector and providing adaptations and improvement to vulnerable residents with our housing advice and homelessness work.

We have invested in new software to meet the requirements of the Homeless Reduction Act and to produce Personal Housing Plans so homeless households have written advice and can access and update their plans on-line.

What we will do

While we look at individual solutions to each person's homelessness through our Housing Solutions Service, working with our partners this strategy focuses on the main reasons for homelessness. To that end after reviewing homelessness in the Borough our priorities over the term of this strategy are:

- To provide an effective and person-centred service that reduces homelessness against its main causes;
- To develop and support service pathways for those residents at greater risk of becoming homeless to access the support they need to live settled lives in the community; and,
- To work with a range of partners to deliver a shared approach to homelessness that maximises available resources and expertise.

2.1 Relationship and Family Breakdown

What we know

This area of homelessness is one of the most complex as it involves very individual and very personal circumstances.

In this strategy we have taken all aspects of family breakdown and looked for some common features or areas of work we can undertake to reduce homeless for this reason while recognising that often it will be our approach to resident's individual circumstances that will be the defining factor in finding a successful outcome.

The main areas of family breakdown leading to homelessness are the breakdown between parent and adult child leading to the adult child being excluded from the family home, and relationship breakdown between a couple whereby one has to leave the home, or the home ceases to be available for both partners.

Often the adult child leaving the parental home has a child of their own and will be moving to their first independent home.

While only small numbers of households are accepted as statutory homeless due to fleeing domestic abuse the reality is that Case Officers are involved in many more cases where other options to homelessness are found. The Housing Solutions Team is represented on the local Multi Agency Risk Assessment Committee (MARAC). This forum considers multi agency actions in the cases of the most serious domestic abuse cases where there is a risk of serious harm. In 2016/17 27 cases involving Surrey Heath residents were discussed, in 2017/18 there were 43 cases and in the first 6 months of 2018/19 there were 53 cases.

What we have done

We seek to mediate to resolve potential conflict that leads to family breakdown, and where homelessness cannot be prevented we negotiate to avoid bed and breakfast.

We provide Rent Choice financial support to secure a tenancy with a private landlord to avoid homelessness.

There is no refuge provision in Surrey Heath however we provided capital grant funding of £50,000 for the provision of the refuge located in Runnymede, with match funding from Runnymede Borough Council, when it was first established.

Surrey Heath Partnership fund a Sanctuary Scheme, providing security works to the homes of victims of abuse to make them safe in their home rather than requiring a move to alternative accommodation.

We work with other Surrey boroughs and districts to move those at risk of serious domestic abuse to other areas, with tenancies offered on a reciprocal basis across the County.

We attend MARAC to ensure the housing options of those at risk of serious domestic abuse are considered as part of wider multi-agency interventions.

With Surrey County Council we have commissioned floating support from Riverside Housing whose remit includes to support residents who need help to secure or maintain a home.

What we will do

We will re-instate home visits for all Housing Register applications received from adult children living in their parents' home to support them to manage and plan for leaving home rather than it happening in a crisis.

We will review the Allocation Policy to ensure that it does not incentivise homelessness and does not penalise those residents who work with us to resolve their housing issue.

We will refer residents living with their parents to Renting Ready training to support their move to independence in a planned way.

We will continue to work with local partners and across Surrey to provide a range of housing and support options for residents fleeing domestic violence.

2.2 The end of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST)

What we know

The end of an AST has been an increasingly common cause of homelessness over the last 8 years, locally and nationally. In the last two years this reason has accounted for over a third of the households we accepted as homeless, and in both years was the single biggest reason for homelessness.

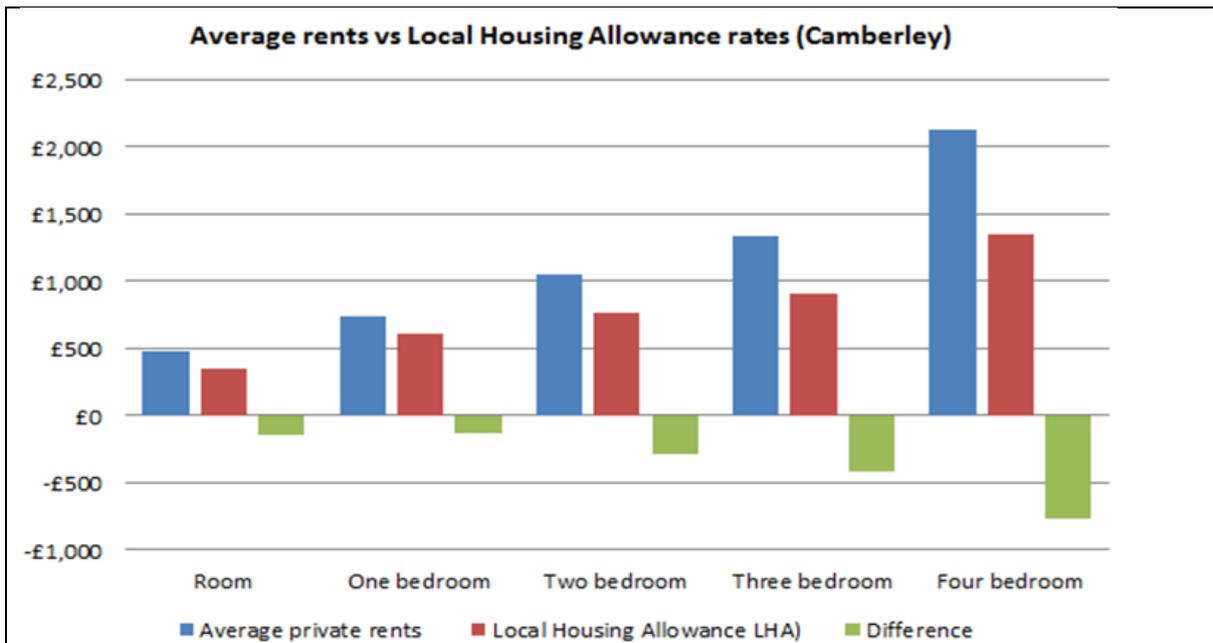
An AST can be ended with a [Section 21](#) notice which, if served correctly with landlord having completed the right paperwork throughout the tenancy, ends the tenancy and allows the landlord to gain possession of the property without a reason.

As no reason is needed to gain possession the Section 21 notice can be used by a landlord to evict for a variety of reasons and the tenant has no defence. For example should a landlord serve a notice for rent arrears the tenant could defend those proceedings to prevent the Court granting possession; if instead the landlord serves a Section 21 because they want to evict a tenant in arrears then the tenant has no defence to these proceedings.

The increase in numbers may have a number of underlying factors: the increased number of people in the private rented sector (both those unable to access a scarce supply of social housing and those unable to access homeownership) and the issue of affordability with incomes not keeping pace with rent levels and Local Housing Allowance being frozen.

For those on low incomes or reliant on benefits the freeze in [Local Housing Allowance](#), the financial help available towards rent, has meant an increasing gap between the help available and average rents requiring households to find money to 'top up' the assistance they get to meet their rent obligations.

The table below sets out rents in Camberley as at March 2019 and the [maximum LHA](#) available for each size of property.



In the early stages of this strategy [Universal Credit](#) is being rolled out in Surrey Heath, meaning that the help most tenants get towards their rent will be paid in a single sum along with other benefits. This will effect private and social housing tenants with evidence from other areas showing an increase in rent arrears due to both the way the payments are made and also many tenants having to manage money that previously went straight to their landlord. Our response to this can be found in the welfare reform section.

What we have done

We have consolidated our housing services into one team. This Housing Hub includes Case Officers working on homelessness prevention and housing advice (Housing Solutions Team) and Environmental Health Officers working on private sector housing enforcement who also have responsibility for the Councils grants programme, delivering financial assistance for adaptations and home improvements (Home Solutions Team).

This cross disciplinary work has improved the service to tenants and landlords: giving us the ability to give both advice and support to make tenancies successful and prevent homelessness, as well as being able to tackle issues where a small minority of landlords do not meet their responsibilities in terms of serving correct notice, managing their homes or keeping the homes safe for tenants.

This work has been further enhanced by employing a Letting Negotiator within the Housing Hub. While the primary focus of the role is accessing additional tenancies the single point of contact for landlords and agents has improved our ability to support landlords and access homes for residents.

Case Officers in the Housing Solutions Team have been trained in tenancy law, and this training is regularly updated. This means that notice served on tenants can be properly scrutinised to ensure that landlords are meeting their obligations and tenants advised on their rights.

Often small interventions can resolve a tenancy issue and prevent homelessness. Case Officers have access to a pot of funding to assist tenants who would otherwise become homeless. Payments from this 'prevention pot' could be used to address a small amount

of arrears accrued through hardship and pay fees at renewal of a tenancy. These are cost effective interventions and are linked with other work with the tenant (for example if we help with arrears we might ask the tenant to engage with Money Advice services as a condition of that assistance).

For those with an entitlement to Local Housing Allowance it is possible to apply for a [Discretionary Housing Payment](#) (DHP). While administered by the Council's Revenues and Benefits Service decisions on DHP are made jointly with the Housing Solutions Team, with weekly meetings to assess applications. As with payments from the prevention pot, DHP awards are linked to wider housing advice and involve the tenants to commit to actions that will resolve any issues in their tenancy.

The Council is a member of [ATLAS](#) (Accreditation and Training for Landlords and Agents Service), giving local landlords access to an accreditation scheme that supports them with training, advice and other services covering all aspects of tenancy and property management. At April 2019 there were 54 local landlords accredited.

What we will do

We will continue to ring-fence Prevention from Homelessness Grant for homeless prevention work in the Housing Hub allowing Case Officers the flexibility to find individual and innovative interventions to support residents keep their home from a 'Prevention Pot'.

The Revenues and Benefits Service and Housing Solutions Team will continue joint work to ensure that Discretionary Housing Payments are used flexibly and effectively to prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies.

Early intervention is essential if there is a way of preventing a tenancy from ending, to this end we will undertake the following work:

1. Following a successful bid lead by Accent and supported by the Council and the Hope Hub we are national pilots for the [Crisis Renting Ready](#) programme, providing tenancy training for people who have not held a tenancy or who have not been successful in maintaining a tenancy previously. Following the pilot phase we will develop a local model to give these residents the best chance of securing and maintaining a tenancy.
2. Undertake a campaign to promote landlord accreditation, considering what incentives can be offered to landlords who are accredited. Accredited landlords have the knowledge and support to effectively and legally manage their properties, and proactive management is likely to lead to less tenancy issues and more sustainable tenancies.
3. Encourage landlords to talk to us before serving a Section 21 notice to see if we are able to resolve any tenancy issues.
4. Ensure that tenants served with a Section 21 notice, or who are worried that they cannot sustain their tenancy, know to seek advice at an early stage.
5. Investigate whether local landlords see benefit in holding a local landlord's forum, and, if so, what form this should take in order to support them to provide a sector that is a secure and suitable option for residents.

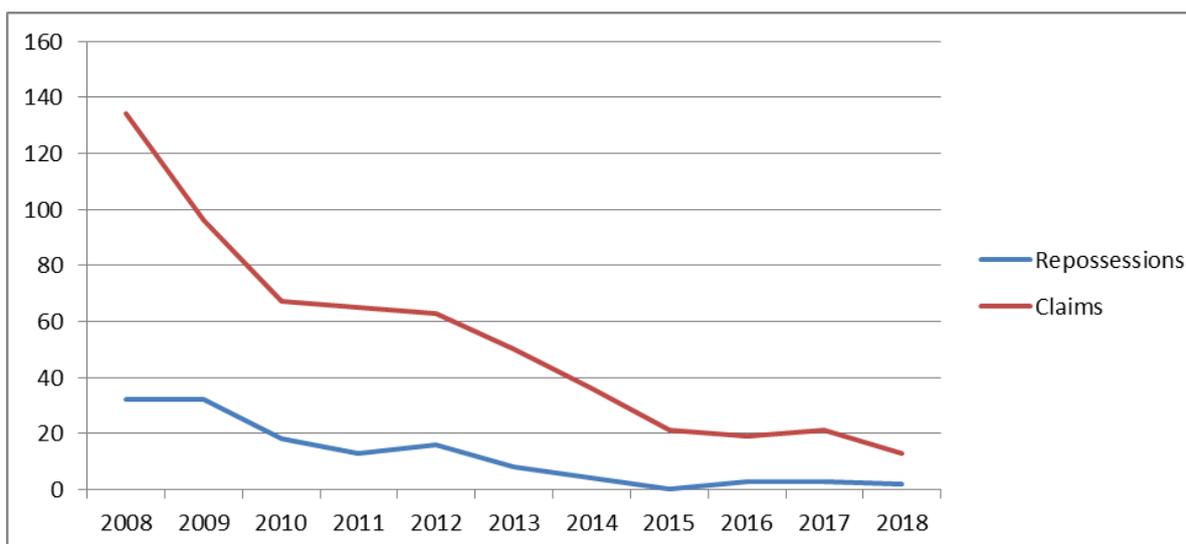
At a strategic level we will take every opportunity to lobby Central Government to ensure that the support for low income residents needing help with their rent is based on the reality of local rent levels.

New Government reporting means that the reasons behind the serving of a Section 21 notice must now be collected. This will give us more detailed information and allow us to develop a local response to local issues and this data will be reviewed annually to inform the direction of this strategy.

2.3 Mortgage Arrears

What we know

Census figures show that 77% of homes are owned in Surrey Heath, compared to 68% regionally and 63% across England. 42% of homes are owned with a mortgage. Court activity in respect of mortgage arrears is currently low however, as the figures in the table below show, external economic factors can impact on the numbers.



What we have done

Lenders are required to notify us of any resident who is subject to possession proceedings. We contact these residents and offer the Housing Solutions service.

Case Officers have generalist knowledge to help residents with debt issues and can refer to specialist help at Citizens Advice Bureau and Frontline, and specialist mortgage advice with the National Housing Advice Service (NHAS).

What we will do

In light of what we know it is evident that any change in interest rates or other external economic factors could impact on residents' ability to meet their mortgage commitments. This will be monitored annually as part of the review of this strategy to ensure we can respond appropriately to any change.

2.4 Other factors

Reasons for homelessness linked to specific groups, such as discharge from the Armed Forces and hospital discharge, will be looked at in the next section when we consider the help and support available to certain client groups who experience homelessness.

3 Finding Pathways for At Risk Groups

Introduction

Research has shown that certain groups of people are disadvantaged in their ability to access housing, are over represented in homeless populations and often struggle to maintain a home without support.

The Council has a duty to consider the needs of these people and plan to provide the services they need to prevent homelessness and ensure there is support in place for them to maintain accommodation.

3.1 Rough Sleepers

What we know

In formulating the previous Strategy, action on rough sleeping was not a priority, and it was noted that there was not a significant rough sleeping issue in the Borough.

Since the last review this situation has changed as demonstrated by the Council's Annual Rough Sleeper count. The Council is required to do an annual count or estimate of the number of rough sleepers out on a given night in November. While we do an estimate rather than a physical count the numbers we return are based on named individuals identified by the Council and partner agencies and independently verified by Homeless Link on behalf of Ministry of Housing, Community and Local Government.

The table below shows our reported numbers.

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number	0	2	1	0	4	18	12	5	6

At its peak, anecdotal evidence indicates there were a number of single homeless people coming to the Borough from other areas to access a voluntary sector provision that was actively encouraging this inward migration.

While this may distort the scale of the local problem it cannot be used to explain away an increasing local issue.

Further evidence can be found by looking at the number of single people on the housing register who are no fixed abode which, as well as rough sleepers, captures those who are sofa surfing or in other precarious housing situations. As there are a number of strict criteria to join the housing register this still does not reflect every single person in this position in the Borough.

At 10th May 2019 there were 16 NFA applicants on the Housing Register, all with a Surrey Heath connection.

When the TAP Project was running (see below) the TAP Co-ordinator worked with 64 individuals over an 18th month period who were or had a history of rough sleeping. All had a Surrey Heath connection.

Since its inception in June 2018 to April 2019 the Hope Hub has worked with 109 single vulnerable people.

At the beginning of May 2019 the Housing Solutions Team's Homelessness Reduction Act case load is currently 83 cases, of which 47 are single people.

Housing associations provide single person accommodation but there is limited availability. Currently there are 260 single people and couples on the Housing Register (constituting 55% of all applications) while table below shows the availability of housing association one bedroom homes over the last 5 years.

Year	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Homes available	43	42	32	37	52

While it is difficult to identify specific trends amongst this population the Housing Solutions Team are aware of the following issues that both lead to homelessness and make finding a housing option difficult: LHA freeze meaning financial assistance with rent does not meet local rent levels (see table below); Universal Credit being unpopular with landlords especially for single people who have been in prison, have drug and alcohol issues or other vulnerability; lack of affordable shared housing; and, lack of supported housing options.

As at 1/2/19	Average rent per week	Local Housing Allowance per week (Camberley)	Difference
Single Room	£117.69	£79.92	£37.77
One bedroom property	£168.00	£141.24	£26.76

Problems with drugs or alcohol can be part of a person's spiral into homelessness. Of course not everyone who has problems with alcohol or drugs becomes homeless and not every homeless person has problems with drug or alcohol abuse. However, levels of drug and alcohol abuse are relatively high amongst the homeless population.

There are complex links between homelessness and reoffending, where each can be a cause and a result of the other. A Homeless Link survey found over 75% of homelessness services in England support clients who are prison leavers. In turn Home Officer research

showed, ex-prisoners who are homeless upon release are more likely to re-offend than those who have stable accommodation.

What we have done

As this issue has presented the Housing Solutions Team has undertaken a number of initiatives:

In 2014 a successful bid was made for Government funding to run the Team Around the Person Project (TAPP). This took the principle used by the Family Support Team to bring together those professionals and services that were needed to support people out of homelessness to work holistically and in co-operation. This worked extremely well with chaotic individuals who often fell through services because of their inability to navigate the various systems that were meant to help them.

In March 2016 we hosted Single Homeless Forum with local statutory, voluntary sector and faith group partners coming together with housing and service providers to understand the current position, both nationally and locally, identify local need and plan a way forward. That forum prioritised day services for single people as the priority in the short term while accommodation schemes were worked on. Accommodation, it was recognised, was difficult to deliver as the ongoing welfare reform agenda left revenue funding uncertain for supported and homeless persons accommodation.

The Forum led to the Council commissioning a piece of work to clarify local need, map local services and identify gaps, get the views of homeless individuals and identify local partners willing to play a part in developing local services. At the start of the work there was no preconceived idea of the outcomes: be it a Council run service like TAPP or an external service. The result was Camberley Churches Together forming a new charity to take on the work, the Hope Hub.

The Hope Hub has now moved into their new premises provided by the Council at the Poratacabin (Rear of Library). While they have a wider remit as a charity to supporting vulnerable people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness they are specifically funded by the Housing Solutions Team for their work with single homeless residents using Flexible Homelessness Grant from MHCLG.

In 2018 a successful bid was made to the LGA for Housing Advisor support. This was targeted consultancy from industry specialists and in Surrey Heath looked at and reported on the options for delivering accommodation for single people using developer contributions.

In February 2019 a bid was made to MHCLG for Rough Sleeper Initiative funding to provide the revenue funding to pump prime an accommodation project.

Case Officers in the Housing Solutions Team have training on issues relating to single homelessness and rough sleeping, including training on safeguarding, mental health and drug and alcohol issues and including both the skills to deal with clients and the legal framework in which support is delivered.

What we will do

The Council will work with the Hope Hub to deliver an offer to single homeless people that navigates them to the services they need and supports them to settled lives in the community. This will be done by contributing funding for the Hope Hub's core work and specific funding for Case Work and Outreach.

Take forward the recommendations in the LGA Housing Advisor's report to deliver shared housing for single people, considering how we can use our asset acquisition ambitions and management functions to deliver a social benefit

Agree a local outreach protocol so no rough sleeper is known to us but does not know us

Deliver annual Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP)

With the Hope Hub collect data to continue understand the local cohort to develop the right housing and support responses to these residents.

Develop wider data collection with Surrey authorities and neighbouring council's to build a better understanding of the wider cohort and use this to develop appropriate services.

Feed data into Surrey Safeguarding Adults Board and Health and Well-being Boards to support wider service development including specific work on the rough sleeper and single homeless strand of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Provide the Hope Hub with a recyclable fund that can be used to access housing for their clients. The fund will allow the Hope Hub to work directly with clients and landlords, and as assistance will be repayable over a period of time there will be money coming back in to assist future clients.

Ensure that Renting Ready tenancy training is available for those moving out of rough sleeping and that it meets their needs.

Set up a co-ordination Panel of local agencies to ensure that intelligence is shared about rough sleepers and support to them is co-ordinated, including effective reconnection.

Look at ways of capturing service users' voices and involvement in the assessment and design of services.

Work proactively with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to ensure that our approach benefits from national learning and best practise, including being active in the development of Homelessness Reduction Boards.

Support the specialist work coach in the Job Centre and ensure a joint approach, and be active in the DWP partnership meetings

Continue to ensure that Case Officer training is up to date.

3.2 Young People and Care Leavers

What we know

Research in 2017 by Centrepoin found that 1 in 4 care leavers had sofa surfed and 14% had slept rough.

16 and 17-year olds and care leavers under 21 have an automatic priority need under the legislation.

We have not accepted any 16 and 17-year olds or care leavers as homeless in the last 10 years, not paced any in bed and breakfast accommodation and the Council's joint work on

this area of activity has passed the National Practitioner Service's Local Challenge for 16/17 year olds as part of the Gold Standard assessment.

What we have done

A rapid improvement event was arranged in 2012, by Surrey County Council to address the challenges raised by the [G v Southwark 2009 UKHL judgement](#). The judgement gave clarity on the responsibilities of Children's Services and housing authorities regarding homeless young people. The result of the event was the implementation of a new Youth Support Service for Surrey.

The Surrey 16-17-Year-Old Young Person and Care Leavers Protocols, implemented in 2010, were reviewed with working arrangements setting out a pathway for homeless young people and care leavers.

The Protocols set out pathways for these young people with Surrey County Council leading in providing emergency housing and support and supported housing options and the borough and district councils providing options for young people to move onto independence.

We worked with Accent to improve facilities at Connaught Court and change the use of some rooms previously used for homelessness families to make them available for homeless young people and care leavers.

We are part of in the National Practitioner Participation Service's Gold Standard Programme and to date we have applied for the challenge in relation not placing any young person aged 16-17 in bed and breakfast accommodation, which we successfully demonstrated compliance with, earning us the Bronze Standard Award.

What we will do

A revised protocol is currently being consulted on to take into account of changes in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, as well as changes at Surrey County Council in terms of financial constraint and reorganisation. We will work with County and borough and district partners to ensure that the current successes in supporting young people and care leavers as a joint responsibility are maintained.

Work with Surrey County Council to ensure the MHCLG funded Personal Advisor for homeless care leavers is integrated into local housing and support pathways

Ensure that Renting Ready tenancy training is available for young people starting their move to independence and that it meets their needs.

3.3 Former Armed Forces Personnel

What we know

There are regular news stories about the prevalence of veterans in the homelessness population, especially amongst rough sleepers.

Unfortunately Government figures focus on those households accepted as having a 'priority need' meaning there are limited official figures available to fully assess the extent of the issue. Various charities offer different estimates although many concentrate on London. For example, The Royal British Legion suggests veterans among London's homeless population is around 6%, around 1,100 individuals.

Locally it is hard to assess numbers although it is fair to say in spite of the local military presence numbers are low:

1. In 2012/13 we accepted the full homeless duty for 3 families who were leaving armed forces accommodation, but none since that time;
2. In the last five years we have not accepted any single person as having a priority due to being vulnerable as a result of serving in the Armed Forces; and,
3. At 12/11/18 there were only four households on the Housing Register who were currently serving or had left the Forces in the last 5 years.

This low number may be due to the fact that unless a household establishes a reason to stay in the Borough, for example due to employment, then on discharge they are more likely to return to an area of previous residence or one with a family connection.

There are lots of charities offering support and services to veterans which can assist us in helping those ex-Armed Forces personnel who approach us.

What we have done

We signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant in 2012.

Targeted housing advice is available for former and serving members of the Armed Forces on our [website](#).

We represented all Surrey Boroughs and Districts as the housing representative on the Surrey Community Integration Task Group and is this role devised Surrey-wide monitoring that will take effect from April 2019.

On individual cases we have used the available resources to assist including accessing SPACES supported accommodation for veterans and securing financial assistance from veterans' charities.

Updated the Allocation Policy and introduced new ICT reports to allow monitoring of approaches from former and serving members of the Services to inform service delivery and development.

What we will do

We continue to monitor housing need from the Armed Forces and former Armed Forces community both through direct approaches and our joint work to ensure that we have the right assistance in place, reporting annually in the review of this Strategy.

3.4 Residents affected by Welfare Reform

What we know

A National Audit Office report in September 2107 concluded that the Government's welfare reform agenda was partly responsible for the increase in homelessness.

The effect of welfare reform is not just felt by households not in work. Many working households rely on benefits and tax credits. For example on the Housing Register 38% of households are fully reliant on benefits/pensions, 18% receive no benefits and 44% have an income that is a mixture of salary and benefit support.

The impact we have seen locally has been:

- The freeze in local housing allowance pricing residents out of the private rented market as the help available fails to match market rents;
- Families affected by the benefit cap struggling to meet housing costs, even in housing association homes;
- Accent report that tenants on Universal Credit carry higher rent arrears levels than other tenants;
- Landlords being less willing to take homeless households into private rented tenancies, especially single people, as previously the Council could pay Housing Benefit direct to the landlord while Universal Credit goes to the tenants unless there are arrears;
- Residents refusing offers of housing association homes on affordable rents as they cannot afford them

The double impact of welfare reform has been to make some peoples current home harder to afford while restricting the options available to people on benefits.

What we have done

We set up and chaired a local Welfare Reform Group, bringing together Council staff, housing providers and the voluntary sector to share information and co-ordinate support to residents affected.

Housing Solutions and Revenues and Benefits staff jointly assess applications for Discretionary Housing Payments. While supporting residents with a financial award the assistance given is linked to actions that they should take to resolve their financial difficulties (e.g. debt advice, downsizing, etc.).

The Renting Ready programme includes training for residents on managing their money, including changes to the benefits system and the way in which money is now received. Case Officers have a good relationship with Frontline and referrals are made as part of the assessment process and included in personal Housing Plans.

Case Officers have received training on changes to the welfare system.

Worked with Revenue and Benefits to ensure Discretionary Housing Payments are available for residents suffering hardship and that financial assistance runs alongside other help to move them out of benefit dependence.

With Surrey County Council we have commissioned floating support from Riverside Housing whose remit includes to help residents in need of help manage their household budgets.

Worked with Frontline to make referrals of housing customers with money issues.

What we will do

Continue to work with partners through the DWP Partners Group to support residents affected by welfare reform including monitoring impact, co-ordinating programmes of support and producing customer information.

Support campaigns by housing and support providers on income maximisation, pathways to employment and money management.

Refer all housing customers in need of Personal Budgeting to Frontline and Citizens Advice Surrey Heath.

Continue to target Discretionary Housing Payments to residents at risk of homelessness due to welfare reform.

Review the Allocation Policy to ensure that housing association tenants who need to move due to the social size criteria ('bedroom tax') have sufficient priority to secure a move to a suitably sized home.

Continue to ensure that Case Officers are trained in changes to best support residents.

3.5 Residents whose housing is impacted by their mental health

What we know

Housing and mental health are often linked. Poor mental health can make it harder to cope with housing problems, while being homeless or having housing problems can make mental health worse. Related factors can also impact on the mental health of residents leading to homelessness, such as debt, loss of employment or relationship breakdown.

In a study by Shelter in 2017 housing affordability was the most frequently referenced issue by those who saw housing pressures having a negative impact upon their mental health.

NHS figures show 1 in 4 people will have an issue with their mental health this year.

136 households on the Housing Register at the beginning of May 2019 indicated that there was a member with mental health issue (ranging from anxiety and depression to severe and enduring conditions).

Evidence from the Team Around the Person work with rough sleepers found that while many had mental health issues they had difficulty in accessing and staying engaged with services due to their chaotic life styles.

Home Group provide three shared houses in Camberley for people recovering from poor mental health and moving back to independence within eth community.

What we have done

With other Surrey Boroughs and Districts, CCGs and hospital trusts we have agreed a mental health [protocol](#) that seeks to support those people who are in the mental health system who are also experiencing a housing problem so they can access a co-ordinated response and not approach in crisis.

Work with Home Group to ensure access to their accommodation for residents needing supporting housing.

Hold regular multi-agency meetings with Home Group and the Community Mental Health Recovery Service to have a planned approach to individuals and services locally.

Bid for funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to funding a mental health case worker at the Hope Hub, with additional funding requested from Surrey Heath CCG.

With Surrey County Council we have commissioned floating support from Riverside Housing whose remit includes to work with residents whose mental health affects their ability to secure or maintain accommodation.

What we will do

Training is planned to be provided by the Housing Solutions Team Manager to Acute Care Units (ACUs) on housing, homelessness and the Mental Health Protocol.

Refresh officer training on working with people with mental health issues, and on safeguarding.

Review the Allocation Policy to ensure that residents who are ready to move on from supported housing have a sufficient priority to move to a home in the community.

Finalise funding for a mental health case worker based at the Hope Hub.

3.6 Other factors

While these are the main presenting factors we know that there are other groups of people whose needs or circumstances lead to them being homeless or at risk of homelessness. These include people with physical disabilities and long-term health problems, people with learning disabilities, ex-offenders, and people with substance issue issues. We will continue to address the needs of individual clients through a personalised approach, while monitoring approaches to identify any issues or trends that need to be addressed in our work and included in the annual review of this strategy.

4 Increasing the supply of accommodation

What we know

Housing associations provide social housing in the borough however demand always outstrips supply.

The Thames Basin SPA and viability issues impact on the delivery of new affordable housing.

Private rented housing is increasingly unaffordable for people on low incomes and benefits.

There is a limited supply of shared housing for single people.

There are very limited supported housing options and only for people with mental health issues so no local accommodation for rough sleepers, other single homeless people, young people or other client groups.

There is a sufficient supply of sheltered housing for older people, although there is no extra care provision.

There is generally a sufficient supply of temporary accommodation, although availability can be adversely affected by a lack of move on to settled housing. Bed and breakfast use is the last resort when there is no local temporary accommodation, or the accommodation available is not suitable for the homeless household.

What we have done

The Core Strategy sets out the planning requirements for affordable housing provision.

Commissioned independent viability assessment to seek to ensure that affordable housing delivery is maximised.

Rent Choice provides financial assistance to help people secure private rented accommodation and employing a Letting Negotiator within the Housing Solutions Team has improved our ability to support landlords and access homes for residents.

Worked with Home Group to secure supported housing for people with mental health issue.

In 2018 a successful bid was made to the LGA for Housing Advisor support. This was targeted consultancy from industry specialists and in Surrey Heath looked at and reported on the options for delivering accommodation for single people using developer contributions.

In February 2019 a bid was made to MHCLG for Rough Sleeper Initiative funding to provide the revenue funding to pump prime an accommodation project.

What we will do

Commission a Housing Needs Study to inform future planning policy on affordable housing delivery.

Develop a Housing Strategy setting out how new affordable housing will be delivered in the Borough.

Take forward the recommendations in the LGA Housing Advisor's report to deliver shared housing for single people, considering how we can use our asset acquisition ambitions and management functions to deliver a social benefit

Review the Allocation Policy to ensure that it works both for individual households in housing need and makes best use of the housing stock.

Work with Surrey County Council on the Surrey Accommodation with Care and Support strategy to deliver the right accommodation for older, vulnerable and disabled residents in the Borough.

Investigate social letting agency models to see if supply in the private rented sector can be increased by direct involvement with the sector

5 Resources

The Council's Housing Service sits within Regulatory.

It is split into two teams:

Housing Solutions providing homelessness prevention case work, statutory homelessness functions, housing advice, private rented sector housing access and the allocation of housing association homes.

Home Solutions providing private sector housing enforcement, licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation and the Council's Home Improvement Agency, delivering Disabled Facilities Grants.

The Teams are supported by a small business hub providing administrative and financial support.

While the staff Team I funded by the Council much of the support provided to individuals and to fund project work is grant reliant. As well as funding provided by Government as part of national programmes successful bids have been made for other pots of money.

Funding awards to date have only be announced up to 2019/20 so the Housing Service has planned on using the resource over a longer period to protect services and projects.

In the early stages of this strategy funding will be used internally to update ICT, delivering on the Annual Plan priority of improving access to services through use of technology, and for providing individual interventions to prevent residents from becoming homeless.

Following a successful bid funding is also available from the Government's Rough Sleeper Initiative to deliver an accommodation project for single homeless residents, linked with use of developer contributions ring-fenced for affordable housing delivery.

Externally funding is committed to the Hope Hub in 2019/20 and 2020/21 both for their core work and specifically to fund a Case Worker.

Other projects will be identified as this strategy progresses and bids will be made for any additional funding that is made available.

6 Partnerships

The Council has a priority to maintain services by working collaboratively with partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors. Such collaboration is central to the delivery of homelessness prevention and housing support, both when working with individual households as well as in developing a strategic approach to shared agendas and designing shared services.

We work closely with other Surrey Boroughs and Districts across a range of issues, from supporting moves across Surrey for people at risk of violence to sharing training costs.

We have protocols with Surrey County Council in working with homeless 16 and 17 year olds and care leavers, a mental health protocol with health agencies and an offender's protocol with Probation.

In working with individual households Case Officers attend child protection and adult safeguarding meetings, and multi-agency meetings for a variety of client groups.

We are part of the MAPPA arrangements, managing the most serious offenders in the community, MARAC, protecting those at serious risk of harm through domestic violence, and CharMM, delivering a joined up response to community safety issues.

We work with housing and support providers in the voluntary sector: partnership working with Frontline and Citizen Advice Surrey Heath, commissioning floating support from Riverside Housing and providing funding to the Hope Hub.

We have nominations agreements with Registered Providers (housing associations) and Accent, our largest provider, is a partner in our Joint Allocation Policy which sets out the framework for the allocation of housing association homes.

All our partnerships are focused on meeting housing need, preventing homelessness and supporting residents to settle lives in the community.