



STAFFORDSHIRE  
*moorlands*  
DISTRICT COUNCIL  
ACHIEVING • EXCELLENCE

# **Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2012 - 2016**

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## **1.0 Executive Summary**

The Homelessness Act 2002 introduced a requirement for the Council to ensure they take a strategic approach to dealing with the issue of homelessness. A review of homelessness in the Staffordshire Moorlands area considers national policy, the implications of Welfare Reforms, the local housing market, existing Prevention Toolkit and service quality considerations. There is general consensus that the changes to government policy, legislation, and funding could lead to an increase in homelessness and demand for housing advice and homelessness services.

The review consequently identifies the following strategic priorities;

- Prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies
- Work in partnership to prevent homelessness
- Mitigate the impacts of Welfare Reforms and the Localism Act
- Increase the availability of affordable housing

The action plan develops opportunities with other key stakeholder agencies to address and prevent homelessness and assist those who are in housing need. The strategy's overall aims and priorities will remain the same, but the actions within the action plan will be flexible and updated over the life of the strategy.

## **2.0 Introduction**

The most 'visible form' or literal approach to defining homelessness is those without a roof. However rooflessness does not constitute the full extent of homelessness. The Council has legal duties towards certain groups of homeless households (appendix 1 outlines these statutory definitions and associated duties). The scope of this strategy is to cover all forms of homelessness, not just where there is a legal duty to provide housing. Homelessness relates to not having a settled and safe home. For instance, having no or limited rights to remain, in insecure lodgings or under threat of repossession. Accommodation may be unsuitable or unsafe for a variety of reasons such as severe overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, or domestic abuse. Homelessness directly affects health (physical and mental), education, employment, and well-being. The prevention of homelessness saves both short term (the costs associated with temporary accommodation provision) and long term (the human and societal costs of homelessness in terms of pressure on health and social services, crime and on children's life chances)..

As a result it is of key importance that the Staffordshire Moorlands has a robust strategy and action plan that develops opportunities with other key stakeholder agencies to address and prevent homelessness and assist those who are in housing need.

At the time of writing there is significant economic difficulty and many changes to government policy, legislation, and funding which could lead to a decrease in third sector and other public services, increased homelessness and the demand for housing advice and homelessness services. Given the proposed changes, this strategy focuses on making the best use of existing resources to deliver effective services with continued partnership working with key stakeholders and agencies.

### **3.0 Strategic context: The purpose of a homelessness strategy**

The homelessness legislation (Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) provides the statutory under-pinning for action to address homelessness. The Homelessness Act 2002 introduced a requirement for the Council to ensure they take a strategic approach to dealing with the issue of homelessness. It places a legal duty upon the Council to undertake a homelessness review in their area and based upon these findings, develop and publish a strategy to tackle and prevent all forms of homelessness which should be renewed at least every 5 years. Staffordshire Moorlands District Council published its first Homelessness Strategy in 2003 and an updated strategy in 2008.

The homelessness legislation places a general duty on local authorities to:

- Ensure that advice and information about homelessness, and preventing homelessness, is available to everyone in their district.
- Assist eligible individuals and families who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and in priority need.
- Ensure there is sufficient accommodation available for people who are or may become homeless.
- Ensure there is satisfactory support for people who are, or may become homeless, or need support to prevent them from becoming homeless.

A homelessness strategy is necessary to meet legislative requirements and is responsive to identified local needs and priorities because it allows the Council to make informed decisions within a strategic framework. It provides a necessary framework for effective partnership working and for the delivery of efficient and co-ordinated advice, housing and support services for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

The overall aims of this strategy are to identify how the Council will:

- Provide timely, quality advice and assistance to anyone who may be faced with homelessness in Staffordshire Moorlands.
- Work proactively with all relevant stakeholders and housing providers to provide a co-ordinated approach to tackling and preventing homelessness.
- Continue to develop innovative and responsive approaches to support people who have concerns about the stability of their current home, with prevention a core principle.

This strategy has been developed in consultation with a broad cross section of stakeholders including housing, service and support providers. To ensure a 'living', effective document that is flexible to change the action plan for this strategy will be reviewed and developed with the Homelessness Forum, the overall aims and priorities will remain the same, but it is likely that the actions within the action plan will change over the life of the strategy. The action plan will focus on areas where work is needed to change practices and procedures and where funding may be required to develop services and actions.

### **4.0 National context: policy**

National guidance that has helped shape the priorities within homelessness strategies include 'More than a Roof; a report into tackling homelessness' (ODPM 2002). It outlined that the focus needs to be on tackling 'social exclusion', the personal problems faced by

homeless or potentially homeless people as on their need for accommodation. It advocated a 'joined up' multi-agency approach and a number of practical initiatives seen to contribute to homelessness prevention. Subsequent national guidance has gone on to outline how the prevention ethos can be delivered in practice. As a result a more coherent approach to homelessness has been developed with a culture of early intervention that takes into account a household's support and social needs in addition to their housing needs.

The national Homelessness Strategy; 'Sustainable Communities: settled homes, changing lives' (2005) whilst broadly focused on reducing the number of people who become homeless (accepted by local authorities as owed the main homelessness duty), introduced targets in relation to homelessness:

- Reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010 by 50% (against December 2004 baseline figures)
- End the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless 16/17 year olds by 2010

'No One Left Out: Communities Ending Rough Sleeping' (2008) introduced an ambitious target to end rough sleeping in the UK for more than one night by 2012. The current Housing Minister has further emphasised tackling rough sleeping as a priority. Within 'Vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out' (2011) local authorities are encouraged to put in place implementation strategies where they have significant rough sleeper estimates or counts. The autumn 2011 total of counts and estimates was 2,181 nationally, a 23% increase on the previous year.

'Tackling Homelessness' (2006) recognises the role of Registered Providers in preventing homelessness through partnership working, sustainable communities, allocation and management policies and better use of existing stock.

The national Domestic Abuse Strategy 'Together We Can End Violence against Women and Girls' (2009) placed an emphasis on prevention, protection and provision. In terms of its implications for housing, the strategy calls for closer working between agencies to tackle domestic violence in their areas, through for example Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC's). Similarly the Every Child Matters and Making Every Adult Matter agendas highlight the need for closely co-ordinated support between relevant agencies particularly around children and single persons facing multiple needs and exclusions.

Following the economic downturn new government initiatives were developed to help homeowners at risk of losing their homes. The Mortgage Rescue Scheme was introduced in January 2009 to assist vulnerable families at risk of repossession remain in their homes. In addition the Pre-Action Protocol introduced by the Civil Justice Council in Feb 2009, makes clear that repossessions should be a last resort and gives clear guidance around lender and borrower action prior to court proceedings.

Despite the lack of a current national Homelessness Strategy, there have been several key updates in homelessness case law which have indicated some areas of focus for this Homelessness Strategy. For example, case law has led to a decision that all lone, homeless 16-17 year olds should be assessed by Social Services under the Children's Act to determine whether they are deemed vulnerable enough to become 'looked after' by the state. In most cases this will lead to a reduction in young people accommodated by the housing authority, but increased problems with regards to commissioning suitable accommodation for this age group. Additionally there have been decisions around the eligibility status of EU members, and on-going cases about the definition of and legal remedies which can be offered to victims

of domestic violence. These decisions will all have an influence upon the ways homeless applications are assessed, and for the preventative measures that are developed.

A new financial climate and set of priorities has to be considered with far reaching cuts to public sector finances and legislative reforms such as the Localism Act 2011 and Welfare Reform Act 2012. Changes across the partner organisations of crime, health and social care are apparent with newly emerging structures and strategic priorities. A main priority for government has been tackling the budget deficit, primarily through reduced spending to services including welfare benefits. The Housing Minister has indicated that some degree of priority will be afforded to ending rough sleeping and tackling worklessness, as well as taking forward the government's 'Big Society' agenda by giving an increasing role to the charitable and voluntary sectors.

There are direct links between the strategic priorities in the Homelessness Strategy and those within a wide range of other national, regional and local guidance and plans. At the local level the Homelessness Strategy is developed in conjunction with the Tenancy Strategy and an ongoing Allocations Policy review in light of social housing reform and new guidance<sup>1</sup>. It also supports the priorities within the Housing Strategy, Corporate Plan, Sustainable Communities Strategy and Local Investment Plan.

#### **4.1 National and local context: Welfare Reform and Localism Act 2012**

Benefits are vital in supporting people to maintain existing housing costs and stability and access alternative accommodation. The Welfare Reform Act 2012, and associated legislation, introduces significant changes to the provision of welfare support, which will impact upon residents currently in receipt of housing benefits and future housing benefit recipients. A summary of the reforms and an initial assessment of their implications are shown in Fig 1, with the impact defined and quantified at the local level where currently possible.

**Fig 1: Welfare Reform benefit changes and impacts**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Policy change</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Local context</b>
Apr 2011	Local Housing Allowance restricted to <b>4 bed rate</b> (no more 5 bed rate), for Housing Benefit purposes	-Larger households increased difficulty accessing/ maintaining accommodation	-1 household affected, reduction of £17.31 pw
Apr 2011	<b>Removal of £15 excess</b> where contractual rent is lower than Local Housing Allowance	-Significant amount of money to those on limited incomes.	-232 households affected
Apr 2011	New <b>upper limits/ caps upon Local Housing Allowance</b> , for Housing Benefit purposes	-Caps range from £250pw for 1 bed and £400pw 4 bed. Affects ability of housing benefit recipients to access private rented sector.	Limited impact, solely within high market value, specifically rural areas.
Apr 2011	Up-rating and increasing the <b>non-dependent rate</b> until 2014, for Housing Benefit	-Increased by 27% in 2011 and 22% in 2012. -Increased financial pressures upon	-Deductions increased by £0 - £23.75pw between 2010/11-

<sup>1</sup> CLG, Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England, June 2012.

	purposes	households with lodging adult children, with expectation for household contributions increases the likelihood of people being ejected from the home and rises in single and youth homelessness.	2012/13 -Further housing benefit information pending
Apr/Oct 2011	<b>Reduction in Local Housing Allowance</b> from 50% of the Broad Market Rental Market Area (BRMA) to 30%, for Housing Benefit purposes	-Increased difficulty accessing affordable private rented accommodation -Maintaining existing accommodation, possible rent arrears and possession which impacts upon ability to secure alternative affordable accommodation	-Reduction (£pw) as follows: <b>Shared rate</b> £10.93pw (x affected) <b>1 bed self contained</b> £5.76 pw (x affected), <b>2 bed</b> £9.21pw (x affected), <b>3 bed</b> £11.51pw (x affected) <b>4 bed</b> £12.84pw. -1200 private sector homes have become unaffordable, leaving 1426 available <sup>2</sup> -Further housing benefit information pending
Apr 2012	The <b>Shared Accommodation Rate</b> extended to single housing benefit claimants aged 25-35 (with few exceptions), for Housing Benefit purposes	-Increased difficulty accessing affordable accommodation within the PRS -Increased need for shared houses, 'Houses of Multiple Occupation'. However inappropriate for some, such as vulnerable, leaving care or prison. - Maintaining existing accommodation, possible rent arrears and possession which impacts upon ability to secure alternative affordable accommodation (i.e references, exclusion from social housing)	-£47.06pw fixed until Mar 2013. -Loss of £31.56pw for 60 existing claimants -Increase in concealed households 'sofa surfing'
From Oct 2012 to Oct 2017	<b>Move towards a Universal Credit</b> (estimated end Apr 2017) incorporates all welfare benefits into a single tenant payment.	-Likely to end direct payments of Housing Benefit to landlords, making benefits claimants potentially less attractive as tenants and affecting tenants who may be less likely or able to manage their finances and pay their rent. -Implications for rent arrears, evictions, homelessness and consequent rehousing difficulties (i.e. references, exclusion from social housing)	Further housing benefit information pending re: direct landlord payments
Apr 2013	<b>Capping the total welfare benefits</b> to a household at no more than the national average wage. Estimated to be £26,000 (£500pw) for couples and families and £18,200 (£350pw) for lone parent and single person households	-likely to impact on larger families	-Further housing benefit information pending

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cih.org/PressReleases?> Housing Benefit cuts will put 800,000 homes out of reach, 5th January 2012.

Apr 2013	<b>Uprating Local Housing Allowance in line with Consumer Price Index (CPI) instead of Retail Price Index (RPI) for Housing Benefit purposes</b>	-Rents may rise higher than housing benefits, which impacts upon the ability of households to maintain accommodation. -Impact on the number of affordable private sector homes available for rent -Impact upon social housing let as 'affordable rent' (up to 80% of market value)	-Potential impact within social housing 'affordable rent' properties identified in high value market, rural areas <sup>3</sup> .
Apr 2013	<b>Social housing adopts Local Housing Allowance size criteria for working age people</b>	- Under occupancy issues due to differing bedroom entitlements in terms of allocation and housing benefit calculation. Therefore difficulties maintaining existing accommodation, possible rent arrears and possession, which impacts upon ability to secure alternative affordable accommodation (i.e. references, exclusion from social housing)	-14% reduction for those that under occupy by a single bedroom -25% reduction for two or more bedrooms <sup>4</sup> <b>-Further housing benefit information pending</b> -An estimated 27% of all new tenants' allocated social housing between 2008-2011 will have excess bedrooms <sup>5</sup>
Apr 2013	<b>Council Tax Discount Scheme, locally defined replacing national Council Tax Benefit system</b>	-With a 10% reduction in government subsidy, shortfalls are expected for working age families and non vulnerable groups such as families and single people. This will impact upon the ability of households to maintain and secure accommodation.	-The potential effect on working age claimants could be up to approx 23% reduction in benefit required to cover council tax bill. <sup>6</sup>
	<b>Abolition of discretionary Social Fund (budgeting loans, community care grants, crisis loans). Replaced by Budgeting Advance within Universal Credit, &amp; others devolved to local authorities</b>	- Accessibility of cash rent deposits and first month's rents for securing private sector accommodation. -Accessibility of essential 'starter' household items such as white goods, which impacts upon the sustainability of tenancies.	t.b.c

It is envisaged by the Government that the welfare reform impact on homelessness will be minimised by the downward pressure on private sector rents created by the withdrawal of public subsidy. However the real issues relating to homelessness are immediate. These changes will adversely affect existing benefit recipients, limit access to accommodation and lead to an increase in homelessness. Any market adjustments take time and landlords' price expectations would need to alter dramatically to fulfill the Government's objectives. Initial assessments of the implications of welfare reforms highlight the need to respond in a proactive way in order to ensure that the benefit cuts do not lead to unnecessary homelessness.

In the Localism Act 2011 the government has presented Local Authorities and Registered Providers with a number of social housing reform choices, these are summarised below.

<sup>3</sup> Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, Tenancy Strategy 2012

<sup>4</sup> HB/CTB Circular A4/2012 Housing Benefit size criteria restrictions for working age claimants in the social rented sector from April 2013

<sup>5</sup> Nevin Leather Associates (NASHF), Localism, welfare reform and housing market change: identifying the issues and responding to the challenge, Feb 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Report to Resources & Overview Scrutiny Panel 'DWP Benefit Changes/ Local Council Tax Benefit System, May 2012



- **Changes to the homelessness duty-** Local authorities may discharge their duty to secure accommodation by arranging an offer of suitable private rented sector accommodation without requiring the applicant's agreement.
- **Changes to housing allocations-** Local authorities will have flexibility in managing their housing registers and can limit who will qualify to join the waiting list.
- **New forms of tenure-** 'tenancies for life' for new social housing tenants may be replaced by fixed term or 'flexible' tenancies, renewable depending on household circumstances. Impacts include increased homelessness and challenges to community sustainment.
- **Affordable rents-** Registered Providers will be able to charge affordable rents (up to 80% of open market value) on new build and a percentage of relets. Potential affordability issues within high market value, rural areas within the Moorlands have been identified<sup>7</sup>.

In response to the Localism Act the Council has published a Tenancy Strategy setting out the matters to which the Registered Providers of social housing must have regard to when formulating their tenancy policies and exercising housing management functions. The main areas covered by the Tenancy Strategy include, Affordable Rents and the introduction of flexible or fixed term tenancies.

## **5.0 Staffordshire Moorlands local housing market context**

In 2009 it was estimated that the resident population of the Staffordshire Moorlands had reached 95,400 (ONS). Around half of the population is based in the three market towns of Leek (pop. 19,880), Biddulph (pop. 19,512) and Cheadle (pop. 12,166); around 21% of the population lives in the larger settlements of Cheddleton, Endon, Werrington/ Cellarhead and Blythe Bridge, located to the west of the district. The remainder is divided among the 34 rural parishes. Approximately a third of the district lies inside the Peak District National Park with around 30 per cent of the remainder of the Moorlands designated Green Belt and these rural areas are characterised by high value market housing.

Predicted growth in the number of households within the Staffordshire Moorlands is 19.1%, with newly arising housing need from 7,406 additional households<sup>8</sup>. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2008) indicates a net annual affordable housing need of 429 dwellings. The downturn in the economy and changes in the housing market will also have an effect on future household formation and the need for affordable housing. There is a widespread perception that as demand and need for homes continue to grow, but mortgage finance remains difficult, the contribution of intermediate housing and the private rented sector will become more important.

There is an exceptionally high proportion of owner occupation in the Staffordshire Moorlands, 83%. The social rented sector forms an important source of housing but its availability varies substantially between the local authority areas within the North Staffordshire housing market. The table overleaf shows the social rented stock in each North Staffordshire local authority in 2010. The Staffordshire Moorlands has the least proportion only 8% of social rented dwellings, with less than half the national average level supply are very restricted.

**Fig 2: Social rented stock within North Staffordshire** (Source: Nevin Leather Associates<sup>9</sup>)

<sup>7</sup> SMDC Tenancy Strategy, 2012

<sup>8</sup> West Midlands North Housing Market Area Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2007 (April 2008)

<sup>9</sup> Nevin Leather Associates, 'Localism, Welfare Reform and housing market change: Identifying the issues and responding to the challenge', Feb 2012

Local Authority	No. social housing dwellings	As % of all dwellings	As % of national average
Staffordshire Moorlands	3,604	8.42	46.67
Newcastle-under-Lyme	9,895	18.36	101.76
Stoke-on-Trent	26,097	23.22	128.71
Stafford	8,520	15.22	84.35
East Staffordshire	6,233	13.20	73.20
Cannock Chase	7,040	17.17	95.16
Lichfield	5,702	13.29	73.68
South Staffordshire	6,342	13.97	77.46
Tamworth	6,090	19.56	108.41
East Cheshire	18,914	11.67	64.66
Telford and Wrekin	15,605	22.43	124.35

In 2009 Staffordshire Moorlands District Council in partnership with local housing providers launched Moorlands Homechoice choice based lettings. A key aim of Moorlands Homechoice was to introduce a clear and transparent means of allocating social housing which highlighted availability and improved customer choice and access. There is considerable pressure on the social rented sector with growing numbers of people registering. The low supply of affordable housing is a feature of the housing market, with high demand and low turnover of approximately 3.9% per year. The table below illustrates annual lettings between the different priority bandings.

**Fig 3: 'Moorlands Homechoice' annual social lettings**

Band	No. of households registered (snapshot)	No. of properties let between Jan 2011-Jan 2012
A - Emergency	9	18
B - Urgent Need to Move	30	54
C - Housing Need	1546	67
D - Desire to Move	719	1
Total	2304	140

Under occupation in the social rented sector (defined as one or more 'spare' bedrooms) is an area an ongoing concern in light of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) criteria affecting social housing from April 2013 (see fig 4). Based on current estimates the potential for under-occupation and the associated financial impact to customers through a reduction in housing benefit during 2013/14 is shown below for the largest housing provider in the District, Moorlands Housing Association.

**Fig 4: Estimated impact of social housing adopting LHA size criteria**

No. bedrooms	Estimated no. properties affected	(£) Housing benefit lost to customers
1 bed	219	135,528 (Recent

		confirmation that SAR not applicable <sup>10)</sup>
2 bed	283	283,810
3 bed	502	419,338

The Staffordshire Moorlands area has 3,960 housing benefit recipients. 2,620 housing benefit recipients are in the social rented sector and 71.9% of those receive some form of housing benefit. 1,340 housing benefit recipients are within the private rented sector. Only 24.4% of private rented tenants receive housing benefits compared to the regional and national averages of 38%. This underlies difficulties accessing the relatively small and selective pool of 11% private sector accommodation within the district. Many landlords are wary about accepting tenants who may be on benefits and / or vulnerable. There are currently 37 members of the North Staffs Landlord Accreditation scheme with 107 properties within the Moorlands area.

Money and debt advice services for home owners or tenants at risk of losing their home is seen as an ongoing priority taking into consideration welfare reforms and ongoing economic pressures. Stakeholders report increased numbers of people approaching for help with often very complex debt crises when the debt problems have begun to impact on their housing security. Furthermore the financial industry foresees increased repossessions in the future when forbearance measures and Support for Mortgage Interest come to end of term, and interest rates increase. An estimated 12% of residential mortgages could be receiving some kind of forbearance at present.<sup>11</sup> There is a risk that repossessions and arrears will start to climb if interest rates and lenders' attitudes change<sup>12</sup>. Figs 5 & 6 overleaf illustrate court possession actions taken by mortgage lenders and landlords (social and private) and also possession orders (outright and suspended) issued within the Moorlands area. The introduction of the Pre-Action Protocol for housing possession claims issued by social landlords based on rent arrears came into effect on 2nd October 2006 and may explain much of the reductions in the numbers of rent possession claims issued and orders made since then. The use of Housing Act 1988 'ground 8' powers by social landlords to seek repossession is explicitly discouraged in good practice guidance<sup>13</sup> however there are concerns that use may increase in consideration of the business risk posed by housing benefit cuts and under occupancy issues. Similarly the introduction of the 'Mortgage Pre Action Protocol for possession claims relating to mortgage or home purchase arrears' can be seen to coincide with a substantial fall in the number of new mortgage possession claims and in the number of mortgage possession claims leading to orders. For the financial year 2011/12 the rate of mortgage possession claims issued per 1,000 private homes was 2.80 and the Staffordshire Moorlands is ranked 189 of all 324 local authorities nationally<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> HB/CTB Circular A4/2012 Housing Benefit size criteria restrictions for working age claimants in the social rented sector from April 2013

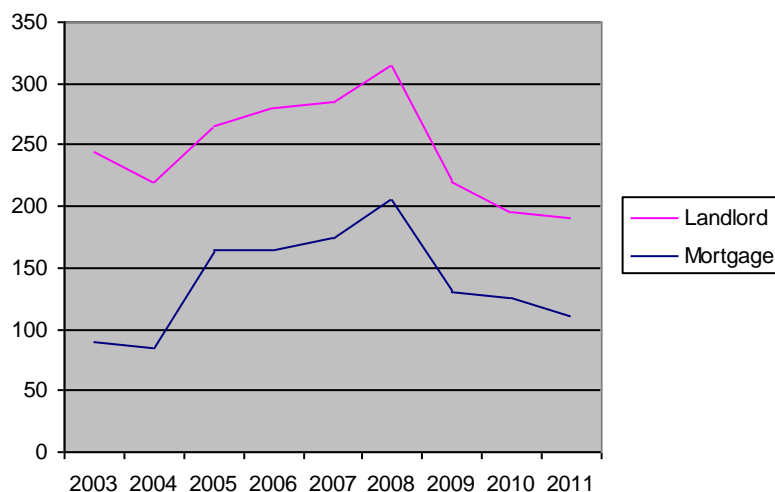
<sup>11</sup> Bank of England, Financial Stability Report, June 2011

<sup>12</sup> CIH The Housing Report – Edition 2 – May 2012

<sup>13</sup> ODPM, Improving the effectiveness of rent arrears management: good practice guidance, 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Shelter, Research Report England Repossession Risk Hotspots 2011/12, 2012.

**Fig 5: Possession claims issued<sup>15</sup>**



**Fig 6: Possession claims leading to possession orders<sup>16</sup>**



## **6.0 Homelessness Review**

The following section summarises the evidence from the homelessness review, and highlights key local issues in relation to homelessness. This evidence helps to establish the extent of homelessness in the District, identify what is currently being done and resources available to prevent and tackle homelessness and focus future priorities.

### **6.1 Homelessness Trends**

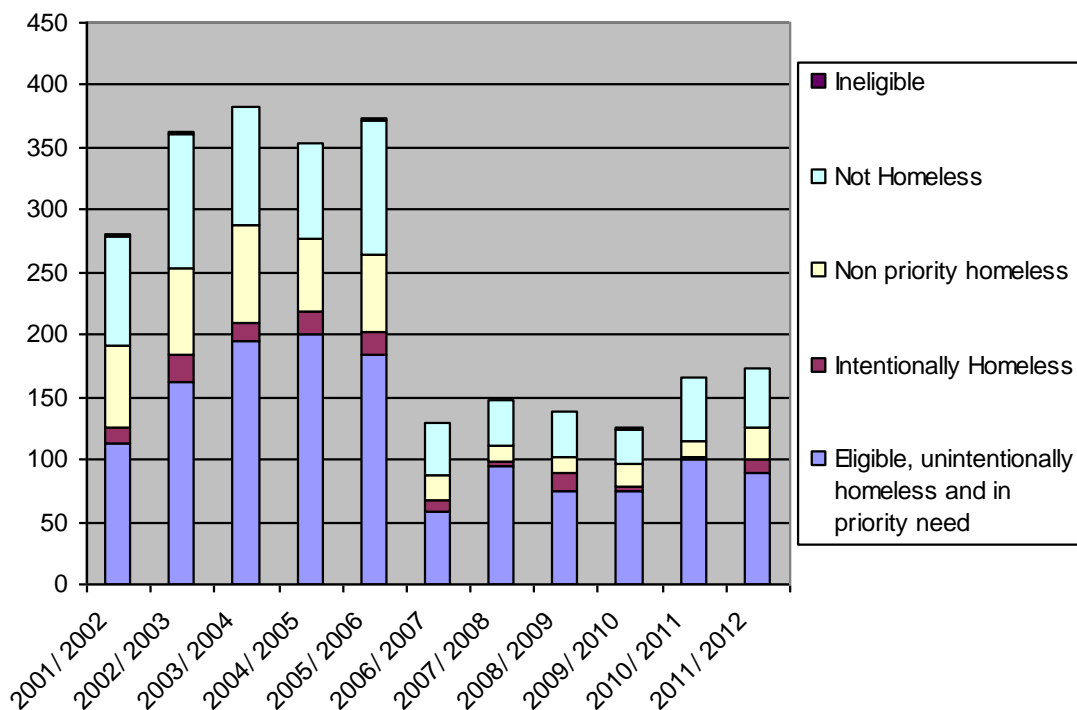
Fig 7 compares annual presentations and decisions from 2001 to 2012. Significant progress has been made in preventing and reducing homelessness since the first Homelessness Strategy in 2003, with homeless presentations and acceptances reducing by more than half in 2006/7. This reduction was enabled by changing focus to prevention with early intervention based on the Housing Options model and the assumption that, by providing advice, support or advocacy before the homelessness actually arises, alternative solutions can be found and the need for a homeless application will not arise. However there are signs that this is

<sup>15</sup> MOJ figures available at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/statistics/civiljustice/local-authority-figures-2000-2011-qtr4.xls>

<sup>16</sup> abid

reversing with homelessness applications rising. In recent years increasing homelessness locally reflects the national trend, between 2009/10 and 2010/11 there was a 10% increase nationally, with a further 14% increase between 2010/11 and 2011/12. Within the Moorlands, those accepted as statutorily 'homeless' increased by 20% between 2009/10 and 2011/12. Welfare Reforms and housing benefit changes are anticipated to increase homelessness levels substantially both locally and nationally.

**Fig 7: Homeless presentations/ decisions 2001 -2012** (Source P1E) <sup>17</sup>



Rough sleeping in the District has remained consistently very low, with 1 rough sleeper reported within 2011 CLG returns meeting the following definition. “People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or ‘bashes’)”<sup>18</sup> Rough sleepers can however move back and forth between local authority areas, in order for instance, to access available services and facilities. The Brighter Futures Rough Sleeping Team, which operates in neighbouring Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme, report that approximately 2 of the rough sleepers approaching the service annually originate from the Moorlands area.

<sup>17</sup> P1E homelessness data collected quarterly for Communities and Local Government

<sup>18</sup> CLG, 2010, Evaluating the extent of rough sleeping  
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingstatistics/housingstatisticsby/roughsleepingcounts/>

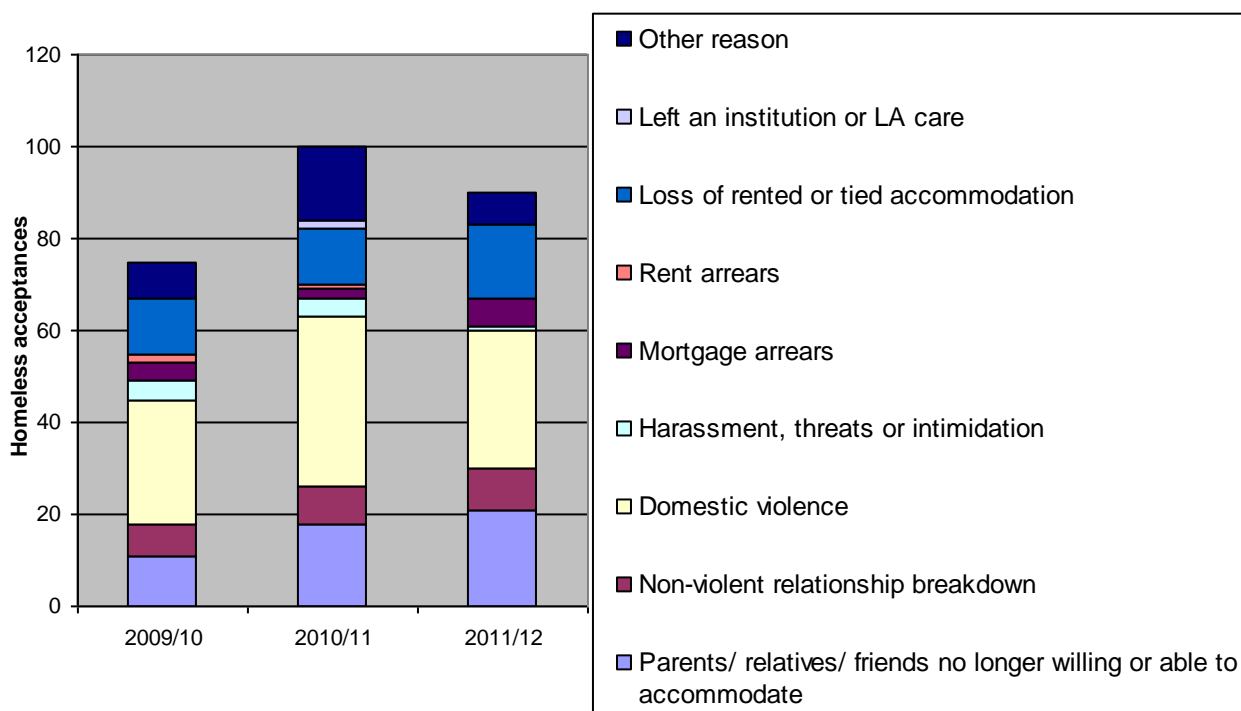
**Fig 8: Rough Sleepers engaging with Brighter Futures**

Year	No. Rough Sleepers originating Moorlands	Means of referral	Total Rough Sleepers approached service	% of total service users originated Moorlands
2007-2008	4	2 self referrals, 1 voluntary service, 1 outreach	201	2.0
2008-2009	5	3 self referrals, 2 outreach,	196	2.5
2009-2010	2	2 self referrals,	102	2.0
2010-2011	2	1 self referral, 1 outreach	138	1.4
2011-2012	2	1 self referral, 1 outreach	202	0.9

The causes of homelessness are complex however the main reasons associated with those accepted with a s193 main homelessness duty have remained the same across the District since the 2003 homelessness strategy and indeed nationally. The data from national returns (P1E) 2011/12 below suggests that the three major drivers of homelessness are still:

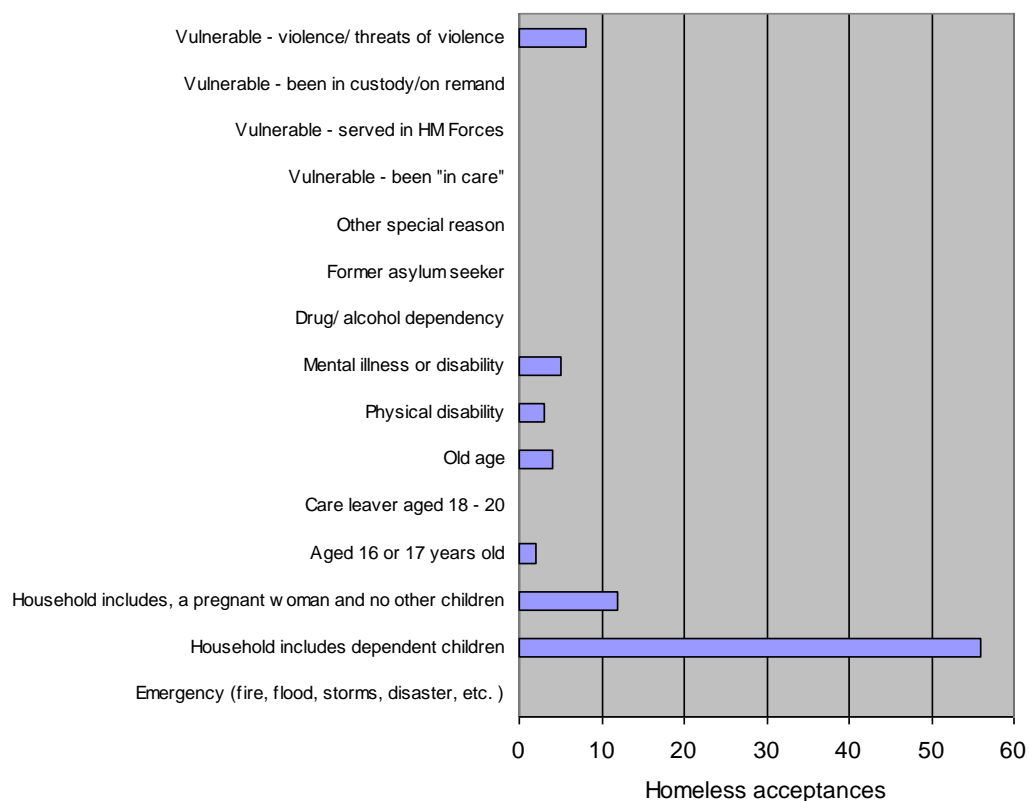
- Domestic violence
- Parents/ relatives/ friends are no longer willing or able to accommodate and
- The ending of an assured shorthold tenancy.

**Fig 9: Reasons for homelessness 2009-2012 (Source: P1E)**



The types or groups of people who have a priority need have not changed dramatically. The largest priority need category is those with 'dependent children' and represents 62% (equivalent to 56 households) of all accepted cases for 2011/12 often because of violent or non violent relationship breakdown. However the priority need data overleaf only requests one priority need category, the presence of children takes precedence over other priority need reasons such as domestic abuse.

**Fig 10: Priority need categories 2011/12 (Source: P1E)**



Key groups of customers continue to be households with children; households with an expectant mother; and households where there is a specific vulnerability e.g. domestic violence, mental health. It so follows that the most common household type accepted as homeless within the last three years are lone females with dependent children, accounting for 48% of those accepted with a s193 main homelessness duty in 2011/12.

The available priority need data does not reflect the homelessness issues around learning disabilities and offenders. 55 out of 293 adult learning disability service users living in the Staffordshire Moorlands shall be seeking alternative accommodation within the next 18 months. During 2011/12, 316 or 7.9% of the offenders within Staffordshire on a 12 month or more probation license were leaving prison to the Moorlands or living within the community<sup>19</sup>. This group has difficulties accessing and sustaining accommodation. 38% have issues identified with emotional well being, 59% with alcohol misuse and 26% with drug misuse. Currently approx 5.5%-6% of offenders from West Midlands prisons are discharged into the West Midlands region into temporary accommodation or as no fixed abode.

In terms of age profile the most common age range for people accepted as homeless within the Moorlands has been consistently between the ages of 25 and 44 years old. There is also a large representation from the 16-24 age range, accounting for an average 33% of acceptances in 2011/12. This also reflects upon the greater availability of alternative accommodation for older people rather than a lack of demand.

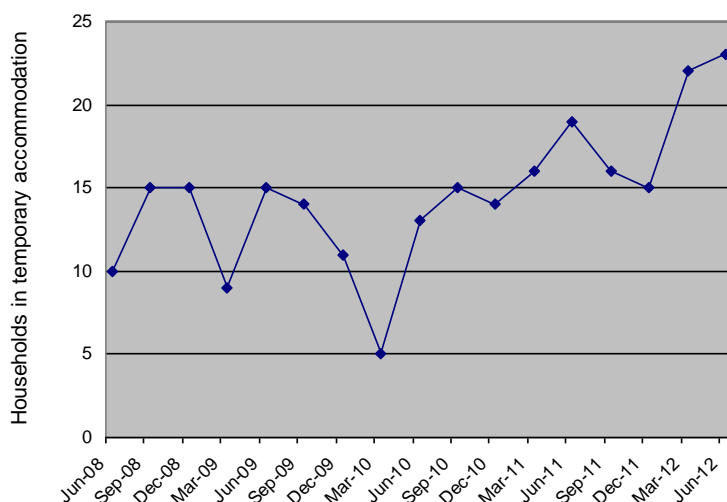
The ethnic profile of those making homeless applications is broadly in line with the general population. The majority 95% are White British, 4% are from White Other backgrounds including Polish nationality, and less than 1% of other Black Minority Ethnic origin, including Asian Indian. The last Feb 2012 Gypsy and Traveller caravan count identified 4 sites with 9 caravans in the District and this minority group are at risk of homelessness due to a lack of

<sup>19</sup> OASys 'risk and needs profile data' available through the probation service

sites within the District. An identified need for two permanent and two transit pitches<sup>20</sup> within the Staffordshire Moorlands District is currently being considered as part of the Local Development Framework process.

As homelessness applications and statutory acceptances of homelessness are increasing there are signs that the number of homeless households accommodated in temporary accommodation (pending enquires or as part of a homelessness duty) is increasing. Early indications in 2012 are that this indicator is now under significant pressure.

**Fig 11: NI 156 numbers of households in temporary accommodation**



In 2009/10, a total of 50 separate households were placed into temporary accommodation. Within the first 3 months of 2012/13 the Council has secured temporary accommodation for 21 households. The table below compares annual numbers of temporary placements alongside expenditure on B&B and the other costs associated with homelessness duties (i.e. furniture storage). B&B is used in emergency situations but every effort is made to ensure that this stay is as short as possible. Increasing net costs outline increased B&B usage and revisions to the ability to reclaim housing benefit applicable from April 2011<sup>21</sup>.

**Fig 12: Temporary accommodation use and cost**

	No. household accommodated temporarily	Net B&B expenditure	Net other temporary accommodation expenditure
2010/11	81	2119.89	2683
2011/12	71	5,906.02	2038.65

Other accommodations secured for those threatened with homelessness, both within and outside the District are shown in Appendix 2. There is a distinct lack of supported accommodation within the district particularly for younger single people and temporary placements outside the District are common in order to address homeless and support needs. Appendix 4 outlines the support services available to Moorlands residents and the Council. Providing the right kind of support at an early stage can prevent homelessness from

<sup>20</sup> Brown, Hunt & Niner, 'North Housing Market Area Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment', 2007

<sup>21</sup> HB/CTB S1/2011 'Further subsidy changes applicable from 1 April 2011 – HB subsidy for customers living in temporary accommodation'



occurring in the first place or prevent repeat homelessness, this is particularly relevant to those that are younger, vulnerable and/ or with multiple complex needs. The provision of accommodation and housing related support is funded by the Staffordshire County Council. Formerly known as the national Supporting People programme, savings of £7 million were required by April 2013, the County Council have however avoided making blanket cuts and managed efficiencies on a targeted basis, i.e. negotiated efficiencies on individual contracts and applied savings targets when tendering. Within the Moorlands a comparison of contract activity for services tendered and investment in housing support services 2011-2012 highlight the end of SPINS (Supporting People Innovation in New Services) projects with ARCH, Moorlands Housing Association and Landau services. As at April 2009, there was a projected contract spend (based on 65% subsidy levels in long term service) of £1,224,501 and in April 2012 this projected spend was £1,104,342. Services will be routinely subject to competitive tender in the future to ensure best value and quality. The commissioning and procurement changes have had little impact upon homelessness services in the Moorlands primarily because of limited accommodation based service provision. There are concerns however that a performance outcome driven approach may disincentivise providers from working with those with complex needs; perceived to have high levels of need relating to mental health or behavioural issues, those with a history of serious offences, offending behaviour, substance misuse issues and/or previous evictions. The need to maintain independence for vulnerable individuals cuts across many partner organisations such as health and probation.

## **6.2 Homelessness prevention**

The causes of homelessness are complex and as such the ways of tackling and preventing homelessness are also complex. A key priority of Government and the local authority is homelessness prevention, the response lies in specialist services, and a whole range of interventions and partnerships that this strategy, action plan and the homelessness forum influence and support. In response to the prevention agenda the Council along with a range of partners has established a range of prevention tools that assist applicants to prevent or resolve their homelessness at the earliest opportunity. In addition to the list below the council continues to work to develop new and innovative prevention services.

- Rent Deposit Bond Scheme
- Money and debt advice
- Court Desk
- Mortgage Rescue Scheme
- Prevention Fund to assist people to remain in their current home or find alternative accommodative
- Single Persons Housing Project (pre-tenancy training, shared accommodation set up and tenancy support for the single under 35's)
- Floating/ tenancy Support (general needs and specialist) key to preventing tenancy failure and repeat homelessness
- 'Move On' from supported accommodation
- Supported accommodation
- Moorlands Homechoice (Choice Based Lettings)
- 'Excluded Project', supported accommodation project for those excluded from social housing
- Sanctuary Scheme security adaptations in relation to domestic abuse
- Information Sharing Protocol with Moorlands Housing Association to enable early notification of potential evictions and initiation of homelessness prevention measures
- Staffordshire Young Persons protocol for agency joint working (16/17 years)
- Information sharing protocol with Staffordshire Police & West Midlands Probation Trust

- North Staffordshire homelessness prevention and mental health discharge protocol
- Local Authority Mortgage Scheme (deposit bond)

### **6.2.1 Homelessness Prevention Toolkit: Outcomes**

Effective prevention is deemed successful where a household is enabled to remain in their existing home where appropriate, or is assisted to secure alternative accommodation. Data is collected around homeless prevention and homeless relief. 'Prevention' captures positive action by a local authority (or a partner agency) that has provided a solution for a household for at least 6 months<sup>22</sup>. Whilst 'relief' records action to assist those that are accepted as homeless or likely to become homeless within 28 days to secure accommodation (non-priority and intentional cases). 91% of preventions achieved in 2011/12 prevented rather than relieved a homeless situation. 173 households were accepted as homeless during 2011/12, however a further 89 households had their homelessness successfully prevented. Prevention is a core area of focus and significant achievement.

- 34% of households were assisted to remain in their existing home, with the main types of interventions being sanctuary scheme adaptations and debt/ mortgage intervention. Debt advice and mortgage casework represents 10% of all successful prevention cases during 2011/12 and 13 households experiencing domestic abuse were enabled to remain in their homes with sanctuary scheme adaptations.
- Where people are unable to remain in their existing accommodation and alternative accommodation is found the most commonly used intervention is landlord incentive with the rent deposit bond scheme which facilitates access to the private rented sector.
- 46 households were assisted into private sector accommodation with a landlord incentive and a further 7 without any incentive required. The rent deposit bond scheme is established as the principle means to prevent homelessness across the spectrum of cause and in so doing, can assist turnover of temporary accommodation and contributes to social and/ or financial inclusion.

The type of alternative accommodation accessed in 2011/2012 is primarily private rented, in 53 out of 59 prevention cases. Opportunities to access alternative accommodation within the private rented sector are increasingly challenging. Going forward further work is required to access alternative affordable private sector accommodation and therefore prevent or resolve homelessness situations due to housing benefit changes and the forthcoming Universal Credit, which affects direct landlord payments. In particular opportunities to address the impact upon the single under 35's struggling to access affordable, shared housing given the shortage of such accommodation and the absence of any supported accommodation provision for young people throughout the district. Access to affordable shared accommodation within private rented and social housing is seen as a barrier to preventing homelessness within the 'Young Persons Housing Project'. The project for single persons under 35 who are or may be potentially threatened with homelessness was established to help individuals stabilise their situation, prevent homelessness, acquire alternative accommodation if necessary and resettle. Home visits and mediation with parents/ relatives is available to help people move in a planned way rather than in crisis. Accredited pre-tenancy training equips potential tenants with understanding of the responsibilities and skills needed to look after a home. Tenancies are supported and ongoing liaison with landlords ensures that arrangements are working well.

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<sup>22</sup> CLG, Recording homeless prevention and relief at E10 of the P1E quarterly return: further guidance for local authorities.

The Council's Homelessness Prevention Fund is available to assist people to remain in their current home or find alternative accommodation. Between 2009 and 2011, 32 households were assisted through the Homelessness Prevention Fund. Used primarily for rent/ mortgage arrears payments the fund is considered to be an essential element in the effective negotiation of repossession cases and facilitating Mortgage Rescue.

The government Mortgage Rescue Scheme assists homeowners eligible for homelessness assistance and under threat of repossession to remain in their homes. Between 2010/11 - 2011/12, 9 homeowners were assisted under the scheme. Mortgage / rent arrears are only directly attributed to causing homelessness in a minority of cases (see fig 9) however the ongoing provision of money and debt advice services for home owners or tenants at risk of losing home is seen as an ongoing priority. In order to maximise value for money and homelessness prevention opportunities the Service Level Agreement with the Citizens Advice Bureau was reviewed in consideration of the following: prioritisation of caseload, roles and responsibilities around debt reprioritisation and negotiation with lenders, referral and feedback mechanisms.

Service Level Agreements and Protocols strengthen partnership working, clarify roles and responsibilities and improve homelessness prevention opportunities. A long awaited joint working protocol concerning young people aged 16/17 has recently been developed between all Staffordshire local authorities and Staffordshire County Council children's services. Joint statutory guidance<sup>23</sup> issued to local authorities and children's service authorities outlines the respective and overlapping duties under Part 3 of the Children Act 1989 and Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to secure or provide accommodation for homeless 16 and 17 year old children, following the House of Lords case R (G) v London Borough of Southwark (2009). The numbers of 16/17 years olds having a priority need under homelessness remains statistically low (see fig 10) however it is anticipated that the implementation of the protocol will improve joint working practices between services, bring much needed clarification to roles and responsibilities and significantly improve experience and outcomes for service users.

The North Staffordshire homelessness prevention and mental health discharge protocol has been developed with a number of local authorities and the North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust. The purpose of this protocol is to bring together all of the agencies that can assist in ensuring that people are discharged from hospital in a planned way, preferably with suitable accommodation to go to and to ensure that any necessary support is put in place. The protocol sets out clear procedures to be followed from the point of admission and addresses bed blocking, patient care, and the effectiveness of the response from the Housing Advice Service because of a shortage of suitable housing options particularly at short notice. Following a successful 12 month pilot the protocol is to be rolled out to other relevant NHS local Community Resource Centers such as the Ashcombe and Brandon Centre.

Currently being piloted is the information sharing protocol with Staffordshire Police & West Midlands Probation Trust and it's accompanying '28 day accommodation/ support offender housing referral form'. Dual purpose it aims to assist offenders in custody with 28 days or less to serve, who are currently homeless at the point of release. It also aims to assist offenders in the community under the supervision of the probation service who have an urgent change of circumstance, resulting in an immediate accommodation need within 28 days or less. It allows a quick exchange of information about offender risk/needs with the Housing Advice Team and the opportunity for homelessness prevention. If homelessness cannot be

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<sup>23</sup> CLG, 'Provision of Accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation', April 2010

prevented pre-release, basic housing needs /risk information can be used to process any application for housing and/or homelessness made.

### **6.3 Service Accessibility and Quality**

The Council Connect One Stop Shop in each of the three main towns, Leek, Cheadle and Biddulph offer internet access, accessibility for those with disabilities and Moorlands Homechoice vacancy advertising. Home visits and drop in sessions at the Biddulph and Cheadle one stop shops are also used as appropriate. The appointment system for housing advice offers an afternoon drop in service for those clients that may potentially be homeless tonight increasing accessibility. Every client approaching the service receives comprehensive a housing options interview based upon their needs. Customer feedback forms are available and feedback from clients in temporary accommodation is recorded by Moorlands Housing Association. A Housing Advice Customer Services Charter is freely available, so clients are aware of what standards of service to expect and there is a texting facility for young people and hearing impaired clients. A means of prioritising/ 'fast tracking' customers threatened with homelessness because of housing related debt has been established within the referral process for the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB). There are 3 CAB's in each of the three towns and these offer independent Quality Mark advice.

### **7.0 Gaps in service provision**

Although some gaps in service provision have been identified and the action plan will work towards addressing these gaps it is important to remember that existing prevention services including those which are in part funded by the council will need to be maintained.

- Moorlands Homechoice allocation policy review; in order to optimise prevention opportunities, consider welfare reforms and the Localism Act 2012.
- Greater engagement with the private rented sector in developing further affordable housing options. The Council needs to build on existing relationships with private sector landlords, to understand their issues and overcome the barriers that they have letting their properties to people who are vulnerable and/ or on benefits.
- The need for more preventative work with young people and in schools
- The need for supported accommodation for potentially non-priority younger people (16-35)
- The use of emergency B&B (for which there is always likely to be a need) to be reviewed
- Actively support and promote a partnership approach to preventing homelessness
- Protocols with registered providers to ensure that suitable housing advice options are given at the end of 'flexible' or fixed term tenancies.
- Establish under occupation strategies with registered providers in consideration of available best practice.
- Promote the services available through the housing advice team.

## **8.0 Strategic Priorities**

The homelessness strategy 2008 had the following key objectives:

- Preventing Homelessness
- Providing a Safety Net
- Minimising Homelessness

This strategy continues to support these objectives but helps to identify a new set of strategic priorities to advance our approach to these objectives. The following strategic priorities have been agreed following consideration of related national, regional and local strategies and guidance, initial assessment of the likely impact of the government's welfare reforms, consultation with stakeholders and consideration of how services can best meet local needs. Despite uncertainty in the economy, funding and policy situation the strategic priorities will provide a sound framework for the next four years.

### **Strategic Priority 1: Preventing homelessness and sustaining tenancies**

The council has been successful at preventing homelessness however there is general consensus that demands and pressures upon the service will increase. Investment in homelessness prevention services can produce direct cost savings for local authorities, such as a reduced use of temporary accommodation and longer term pressures on wider services. Sustaining and developing further homelessness prevention measures are crucial to potentially homeless households. To achieve this priority the Council will;

- Provide early and high quality information, advice and assistance to people threatened with homelessness across all tenures so that they are fully aware of their options and expectations managed.
- Ensure information relating to the Housing Advice service and prevention measures is up to date and well publicised especially amongst social workers and health visitors.
- Carry out Moorlands Homechoice allocation policy review; optimise prevention opportunities, consider welfare reforms and the Localism Act 2012.
- Review the processes and protocols of existing prevention measures to ensure that they can be exploited to the full and any barriers to their use removed where possible.
- Hone the prevention toolkit to ensure that we are maximising the options that are available and making best use of available techniques and resources.
- Provide advice and information to private sector landlords about Welfare Reform and changes to Local Housing Allowance.
- Enable people to sustain their tenancies by ensuring access to pre-tenancy training and tenancy support which meets their needs. The right level of support at an early stage is key to preventing homelessness and repeat homelessness and this is particularly relevant to younger and/ or vulnerable people.
- Work with the Staffordshire County Council to ensure that commissioned housing related support services are accessible to, and meet the needs of vulnerable households.
- Work with young people in schools to intervene early by raising awareness of the realities of homelessness and signposting to relevant services that support and assist young people.
- Continue to improve homelessness data collection and understanding around; 16/17 year olds, former care leavers, 'sofa surfers' (between 2 or more addresses within a specific period of time) and those with complex needs.

## **Strategic Priority 2: Working in partnership to prevent homelessness**

The council will continue to build upon partnership working in order to co-ordinate the provision of services and develop new services to best meet the needs of homeless and potentially homeless households. To achieve this priority the Council will;

- Improve knowledge and working relationships between agencies (particularly through the homelessness forum).
- Work proactively with Registered Providers, sharing good practice and developing ways of reducing evictions and making best use of stock.
- Adopt a co-ordinated approach to grant bidding, working collaboratively to identify and share information on funding opportunities.
- Work more closely with Children's Services and explore the possibility of joint assessments to identify housing and support needs.
- Improve links with public sector bodies undergoing change such as Health and Staffordshire County Council.
- Continue joint working with other agencies through for example MARAC's, CAF's and MAPPA's.
- Evaluate existing 'move on' arrangements, demand and take up in order to ensure that move on from supported accommodation is effective and timely. This will help to ensure value for money from SCC funds invested in these schemes.
- Ensure an effective multi-agency approach to delivering the action plan through the Homelessness Forum.

## **Strategic Priority 3: Mitigating the impacts of Welfare Reforms and the Localism Act**

The council will work in partnership to prevent homelessness and mitigate the potential negative impacts of Welfare Reforms and the Localism Act. To achieve this priority the Council will;

- Work with housing benefits and housing providers to identify specific households whose homes will be put at risk by the reforms and work with these households to prevent homelessness. The £10,198 transitional government funding<sup>24</sup> allocated to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council is being used to support this goal.
- Ensure Discretionary Housing Payment and equivalent fund from the Council Tax Discount Scheme assists those families most in need by reviewing relevant procedures.
- Develop an under occupation strategies with registered providers to ensure the most efficient use of existing social stock and assist households to downsize where appropriate.
- Mitigate the impact of changes to the shared accommodation rate by maximising the availability of affordable accommodation for the single under 35's (i.e. supported and shared accommodation)
- Develop protocols with registered providers to ensure good quality appropriate free advice and assistance is offered by registered providers to tenants who may face rent shortfalls under affordable rents and at review or ending of fixed term tenancies.

<sup>24</sup> HB/CTB Circular S1/2012: Allocation of Housing Benefit Reforms Transitional Funding in 2012/13, 23 February 2012.

- Ensure the provision of money and debt advice and maximisation of benefit entitlements.

**Strategic Priority 4: Increasing the availability of affordable housing**

A corporate priority, the council will maximize the supply of good quality permanent, temporary and supported accommodation. To achieve this priority the Council will;

- Improve links with and work effectively with private sector landlords, agents and the North Staffs landlord accreditation scheme. Ensure that the priorities and motivations of private sector landlords are understood, barriers removed and incentives built. Develop a landlord ‘offer’ that meets with the needs of all parties and a culture that offers reassurance to all parties.
- Seek to develop new housing options for younger people (16-35 years) and support the commissioning of supported accommodation.
- Seek to increase the supply of social housing in the District
- Work with planning services and other relevant agencies to address the needs of Gypsy and Travellers.
- Work with Registered Providers to ensure best use of stock by freeing up under-occupied and adapted homes and reducing unlawful sub-letting.
- Consider all of the Districts needs when negotiating with housing developers, to ensure opportunities to acquire accommodation are not missed.

**9.0 Resources and funding: delivering the strategy**

The 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review identified the Homelessness Prevention as an ongoing area of funding for local housing authorities. The authority’s funding for housing advice and homelessness services for 2012/13 has been confirmed and the budget will be reviewed each year as part of the Council’s budgetary process. The Council has prioritised expenditure as follows:

**Fig 13: Allocation of 2012/13 budget**

<b>Areas Expenditure 12/13</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Schools Education Programme	15,000
Money/ Debt Advice	7,500
Single Persons Housing Project	27,750
Homelessness Prevention Fund	19,000
Private Rented Sector initiative	18,547
<b>Total</b>	<b>87,797</b>

The homelessness prevention fund includes money for furniture starter packs and private sector landlord incentives such as decoration packs which may potentially be linked to an enhanced rent deposit bond scheme or the set up of shared accommodations through the Single Persons Housing Project.

The private sector initiative shall improve links with and work effectively with private sector landlords, agents and the North Staffs landlord accreditation scheme. Ensure that the priorities and motivations of private sector landlords are understood, barriers removed and incentives built. It shall develop a landlord 'offer' that meets with the needs of all parties and a culture that offers reassurance to all parties. The feasibility of introducing accreditation for potential tenants will be considered in order to recognise responsible tenants and give them a competitive edge when seeking new accommodation.

The Council will continue to work with partners to access alternative and review existing funding sources. For instance a CLG rough sleeping and single persons grant has been allocated regionally for joint working across 11 local authority areas. There is ongoing work with the Staffordshire County Council and annual Contract Compliance Assessments looking at existing funding and services of the Excluded Project and Stepping Stones homeless accommodation. Staffordshire County Council provides funding for a range of supported housing across the district and this is detailed at appendix 3

## **10.0 How the strategy will be implemented and monitored**

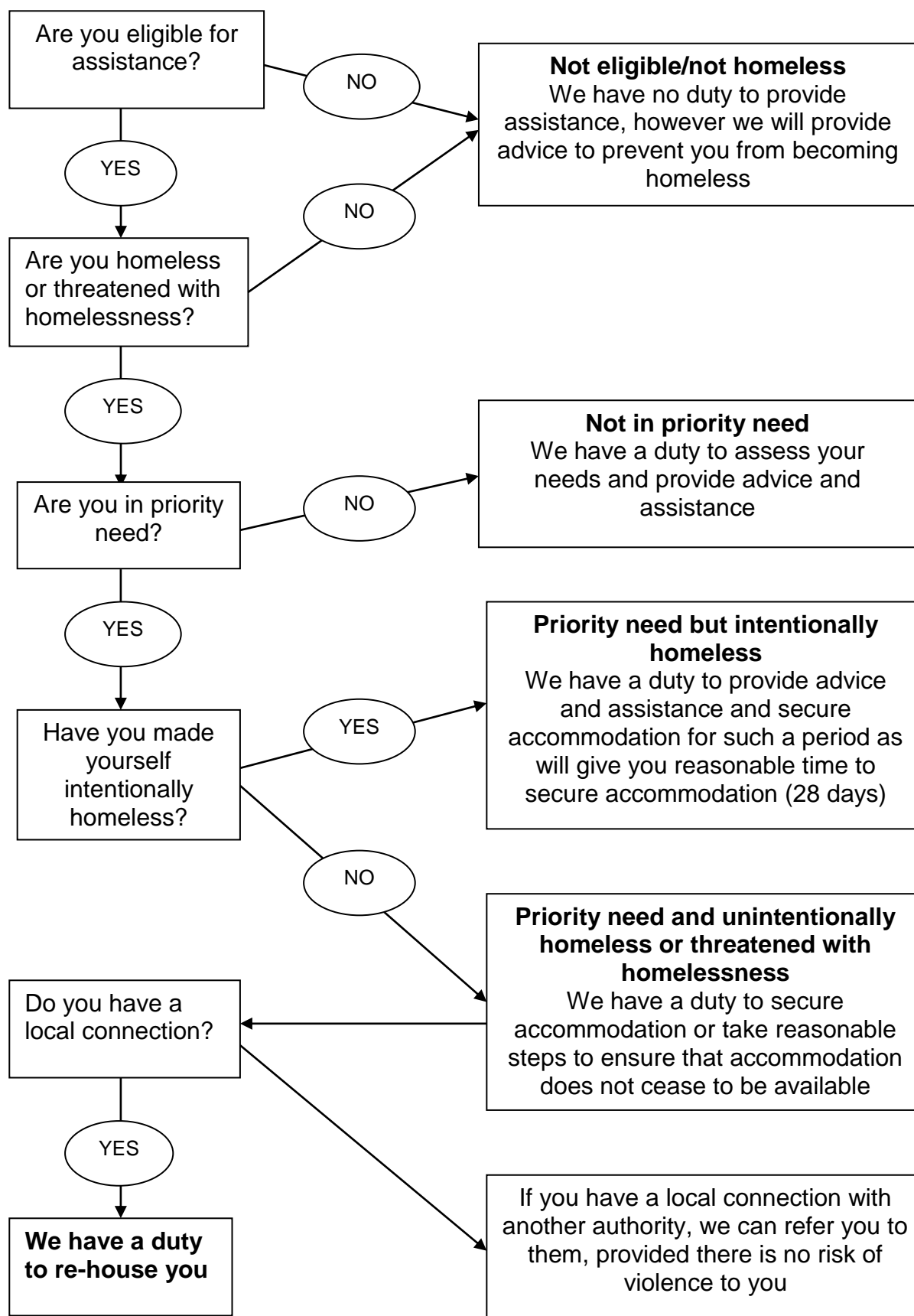
In order to ensure that all of the actions identified through the review are implemented a clear action plan is required. Setting all of the actions out in a plan will ensure that progress can be easily monitored and the impact of the actions measured. The action plan (appendix 5) details the timescales, lead responsibilities, key partners and target dates for each individual action. Wherever possible specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timetabled actions have been identified, however some outcomes are broader or less certain, and these will be refined through review of the action plan. The action plan will be monitored every 6 months to ensure that our outcomes meet local needs and take into account any developments at local, regional or national level. These reviews will be carried out in partnership with key partners and members of the homelessness forum that have assisted in the development of both the strategy and the action plan. In order to ensure that the action plan remains relevant and up to date additional actions may be developed and implemented and existing actions changed or updated.

National performance indicators and statutory returns performance will continue to be monitored through quarterly P1E returns. Other performance measures that can be used to measure the success of the strategy are;

- Increase the numbers of cases where positive action is successful in preventing homelessness
- Number of households in temporary accommodation
- Slow the rate of increase in homeless households
- Customer satisfaction
- Information about the housing advice service will be available in a wide range of outlets to ensure that anyone in housing need knows how to contact the service.
- Number households accommodated in the private rented sector and tenancies are sustained for at least 6 months.
- The number of people rough sleeping



**Appendix 1: Homelessness: statutory definitions and associated duties**



### **Eligibility**

Applicants are not eligible for housing assistance if they...

- do not have full rights to live in the UK because of their immigration status
- are not considered to be 'habitual' resident in the UK, even if a British citizen

### **Homeless/threatened with homelessness**

Applicants are classed as homeless if they...

- have no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere that is available for occupation and that they have a legal right to occupy
- have accommodation but cannot secure entry to it
- have accommodation but it is a moveable structure, for example, a caravan or houseboat, and have no place to put it or moor it, where it can be lived in
- have accommodation but it would not be reasonable for them to occupy it

Applicants are classed as being threatened with homelessness if they...

- are likely to become homeless within the next 28 days

### **Priority Need**

Applicants are in priority need if...

- they are pregnant or if dependent children live, or might reasonably be expected to live with them
- they have become homeless or are threatened with homelessness as a result of a flood, fire or other disaster
- they are aged 16 or 17
- they are 20 or under and a former relevant child (see below for definition)
- they are over 21 and are **vulnerable** as a result of having been looked after, accommodated or fostered at some time in their life
- they are **vulnerable** due to „old age, mental illness, physical disability or other special reason
- they are **vulnerable** as a result of having been a member of Her Majesty's regular navy, military or armed forces
- they are **vulnerable** as a result of ceasing to occupy accommodation because of violence or harassment from another person or threats of violence from another person that are likely to be carried out

The only exceptions to these are, if they are a:

**'Relevant Child'** - if they are 16 or 17 and were in care for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and were looked after on their 16th birthday.

**'Relevant Student'** - a former relevant child in full time education and their term time accommodation is not available to them during a vacation.

**'Child in need'** - if a duty is owed to them under the Children Act 1989.

### **Intentionality**

Applicants are considered intentionally homeless if they...

Deliberately did or did not do something which caused them to leave housing which they would otherwise have stayed in and it would have been reasonable to stay there.

All these points must apply.

### **Local Connection**

Applicants have a local connection if they...

- have lived in the area by choice for a certain time (usually for 6 of the last 12 months or 3 of the last 5 years)
- have a family connection in the area
- work in the area
- have a connection with the area for 'another special reason'

**Appendix 2: Temporary/ Supported accommodation (within the Moorlands District)**

<b>Scheme name</b>	<b>Client group</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Location</b>
YMCA	Single 16-25 yrs,	Direct access hostel	Hanley
Salvation Army	18-65 yrs Single men, homeless direct access hostel	Direct access hostel	Stoke
Macclesfield Hostel	Single under 23's	Shared & self-contained supported housing	Macclesfield
90 Hope Street	Single 16-65's homeless Local connection requirements	Shared accommodation	Hanley
Hopwood House	16 -35 years Alcohol dependent with commitment to change	Shared accommodation	Shelton
ARCH North Staffs	Single 16-65's	Shared & self-contained supported housing	Stoke-on-Trent
Lyme Trust	Single mental health or learning disabilities	Shared & self-contained supported housing	Newcastle
Choices	Learning disabilities semi-independent	Shared supported accommodation	Newcastle
Gingerbread	Lone parent families/ pregnant women	Self-contained supported housing	Longton
The Bluebell Refuge	Domestic abuse	Self-contained supported housing	Stoke-on-Trent
Elizabeth Trust Refuge	Domestic abuse self-contained accommodation	Self-contained supported housing	Newcastle
Westlands Mother & Baby Unit  Eaton Court, Vulnerable Women's Project  Adullam Single Homeless Project	16+ Single mums & 1 child under 5  16-60 females  16-65, 6xhostel bed spaces, 5x(3 bed) shared accommodation, 20xmove-on flats	Hostel, shared & self-contained supported housing	Congleton
Women's Aid Refuge	Domestic abuse	Self-contained supported housing	Crewe, Macclesfield & Cheadle
Brighter Futures Partnership Project	Single 18+ Mental health diagnosis, agency support/ involvement	Supported accommodation	Properties throughout Stoke-on-Trent & Biddulph
Rethink	Mental health needs Shared & self-contained	Supported accommodation	Leek & Biddulph
Community Chaplaincy Service	21+ years ex-offenders.	Shared supported accommodation	Properties throughout Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle
Adullam -Excluded Project	Supported accommodation for those excluded from housing association properties.	Self-contained supported accommodation	6 units throughout Moorlands

**Appendix 3: Staffordshire County Council: Housing support contracts currently operating in Staffordshire Moorlands**

<b>Service Name</b>	<b>Provider</b>	<b>Service Type</b>	<b>Primary Client Group</b>	<b>Number of units</b>	<b>% of units allocated to Moorlands</b>
Smart Moves Staffordshire Moorlands	Brighter Futures Housing Association Ltd	Floating Support Service	Generic	68	100.0%
Staffordshire High Level Support Service	Adullam Homes Housing Association Ltd	Floating Support Service	Homeless Families with Support Needs	36	25.0%
Staffordshire Countywide Offender Service	Heantun Housing Association Limited	Floating Support Service	Offenders or People at risk of Offending	140	12.5%
Approaching Support (Dementia Navigator)	Approach	Floating Support Service	Older people with mental health problems/dementia	30	50.0%
Mount Pleasant, Leek	Beth Johnson Housing Association	Sheltered Housing for older people	Older people with support needs	39	100.0%
Moorlands Court, Biddulph	Beth Johnson Housing Association	Sheltered Housing for older people	Older people with support needs	30	100.0%
Pickwood Close, Leek	Beth Johnson Housing Association	Sheltered Housing for older people	Older people with support needs	41	100.0%
Sheltered - Washington Close	Moorlands Housing	Sheltered Housing for older people	Older people with support needs	34	100.0%
Westwood Court, Leek	Anchor Trust	Sheltered Housing for older people	Older people with support needs	30	100.0%
Alarm Service	Beth Johnson Housing Association	Community or Social Alarm Service	Older people with support needs	246	30.1%
Moorlands Alarm Service - Hardwired (Level 1)	Moorlands Housing	Community or Social Alarm Service	Older people with support needs	771	100.0%
Peak District Alarm Services	Peak District Rural Housing Association	Community or Social Alarm Service	Older people with support needs	13	100.0%
Staffordshire Housing Alarm Service Cat 1 Older People	Staffordshire Housing Association	Community or Social Alarm Service	Older people with support needs	124	27.4%
Alarm Service Midland Heart	Midland Heart Limited	Community or Social Alarm Service	Older people with support needs	112	0.9%
Sheltered Housing Wellington Mill	Midland Heart Limited	Sheltered Housing for older people	Older people with support needs	41	100.0%
Countywide Handyperson Service	Orbit Heart of England Housing Association, C&R - Burton	Home Improvement Agency (HIA) Service	Older people with support needs	29	12.5%
Floating Support for Older People Staffordshire Moorlands	Moorlands Housing	Floating Support Service	Older people with support needs	100	100.0%

Revival Home Improvement Agency	Staffordshire Housing Association	Home Improvement Agency (HIA) Service	Older people with support needs	27	50.0%
Community Re-integration Support Project Newcastle	Burton Addiction Centre	Floating Support Service	People with Alcohol Problems	15	25.0%
CRISP Floating Support in Staffordshire	NACRO Community Enterprise Ltd	Floating Support Service	People with Drug Problems	48	12.5%
Positive Housing Support	Staffordshire Buddies	Floating Support Service	People with HIV / AIDS	10	12.5%
Mount Pleasant House, Leek	Private Landlord	Supported Lodgings	People with Learning Disabilities	1	100.0%
CHA, Semi Independent	Choices Housing Association	Supported Housing (shared or self contained)	People with Learning Disabilities	13	46.7%
Westfields Leek	Choices Housing Association	Supported Housing (shared or self contained)	People with Learning Disabilities	4	100.0%
Leek Living Support Network	KeyRing Living Support Networks	Floating Support Service	People with Learning Disabilities	9	100.0%
Lifestyles (Newcastle/Staffs Moorlands)	Choices Housing Association	Floating Support Service	People with Learning Disabilities	60	50.0%
The Partnership Project Accommodation Service	Brighter Futures Housing Association Ltd	Supported Housing (shared or self contained)	People with Mental Health Problems	8	100.0%
Rethink Supported Housing	Rethink	Supported Housing (shared or self contained)	People with Mental Health Problems	58	58.6%
Stepping Stones - Hostel	Moorlands Housing	Supported Housing (shared or self contained)	Single Homeless with Support Needs	7	100.0%
Floating Support (Domestic Violence)	Moorlands Housing	Floating Support Service	Women at Risk of Domestic Violence	5	100.0%
The Lighthouse	Staffordshire Womens Aid	Women's Refuge	Women at Risk of Domestic Violence	11	100.0%

**Appendix 4: Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2012 – 2016**

<b>Strategic Priority 1: Reduce and Prevent Homelessness</b>					
<b>Task</b>	<b>Lead Officer /Agency</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Outcomes / performance measures</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<p>Provide early and high quality information, advice and assistance to people threatened with homelessness across all tenures so that they are fully aware of their options and expectations managed</p> <p>Ensure information relating to the Housing Advice service and prevention measures is up to date and well publicised especially amongst social workers and health visitors.</p>	<p>Revenue s and Benefits Manager -SMDC</p>	<p>Jan 2014</p>	<p>-Review current information provided by HAT and partners including web sites and other media.                      Agree &amp; implement improvements                      -Review knowledge of front line non-housing professionals (first responders) and other internal depts.                      -Update Homelessness procedure manuals.                      -Mystery shopping exercise -Review customer feedback monitoring and communication.</p>	<p>High quality, customer relevant, housing service information, produced to improve customer access to services, in the Corporate style</p> <p>Customer satisfaction</p>	
<p>Carry out Moorlands Homechoice allocation policy review; optimise prevention opportunities, consider welfare reforms and the Localism Act 2012.</p>	<p>Strategic Housing Manager SMDC</p>	<p>March 2013</p>	<p>-Review and policy updated October 2012                      -SMDC and MHA Board agree scheme March 2013</p>		
<p>Undertake review of out of hours emergency service</p>	<p>Revenue s and Benefits Manager -SMDC</p>	<p>Dec 2014</p>	<p>-Review procedures                      -Mystery shopping exercise</p>	<p>High service quality &amp; customer satisfaction.                      Statutory duties and homelessness prevention</p>	

**Strategic Priority 1: Reduce and Prevent Homelessness**

Task	Lead Officer /Agency	Target Date	Milestones	Outcomes / performance measures	Progress
<p>Hone the council's prevention toolkit to ensure that we are maximising the options that are available and making best use of available techniques and resources.</p>	<p>Revenue s and Benefits Manager -SMDC</p>	<p>Dec 2014</p>	<p>-Benchmark homeless prevention practices with other local authorities and more widely                      -Review &amp; expand toolkit                      - Review and develop protocols &amp; SLAs with existing partners to ensure that they are working effectively, are strategically and operationally fit for purpose and provide the best possible service Establish monitoring mechanisms, targets, and implement with training as necessary; Young Persons protocol                      Expand to other target audiences where appropriate -mental health discharge protocol</p>	<p>Increased and improved homelessness prevention options.</p>	
<p>Review Pre Tenancy Training (PTT) and tenancy support</p> <p>Work with specialist drug and alcohol treatment services to develop robust referral arrangements and monitor outcomes</p>	<p>Strategic Housing Manager-SMDC</p>	<p>Mar 2013</p>	<p>-Review and commission Pre Tenancy Training                      -Review availability of tenancy support- protocols, outcomes monitoring &amp; referral means</p>	<p>Improved skills for young people &amp; other to live independently and maintain a successful tenancy.                      Number of people accessing the PTT course/ support</p>	

<b>Strategic Priority 1: Reduce and Prevent Homelessness</b>					
<b>Task</b>	<b>Lead Officer /Agency</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Outcomes / performance measures</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Work with Staffordshire County Council to ensure that commissioned housing related support services are accessible to, and meet the needs of vulnerable households.	Strategic Housing Manager-SMDC	Jan 2014	Work with the Staffordshire County Council to identify support needs and gaps in provision; and to strategically review and commission -Review of Stepping Stones & Excluded Project provision	Review and commissioning of Joint Commissioning services Improved services to meet identified needs and fill service gaps	
Provide a schools education programme	Strategic Housing Manager-SMDC	March 2013	Identify funding & agree delivery arrangements or 2012/13	Reduction in presentations from young people Number of pupils receiving education programme.	
Improve homelessness data collection and understanding around; 16/17 year olds, former care leavers, 'sofa surfers' (between 2 or more addresses within a specific period of time) and those with complex needs	Michelle Costello - SMDC	March 2014	-Review means of collecting data	Monitoring mechanisms in place Better understanding of local homelessness	
Review access to furniture and essential starter/ white good items	Revenue s and Benefits Manager -SMDC	Jan 2014	-Review customer means of accessing furniture & essential starter/ white good items. -Identify funding & agree delivery arrangements or 2012/13	Number of households receiving assistance with furniture/ essential item Tenancy sustainment	



**Strategic Priority 2: Working in partnership to prevent homelessness**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Lead Officer /Agency</b>	<b>By when</b>	<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Outcomes/ performance measures</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Adopt a co-ordinated approach to grant bidding, working collaboratively to identify and share information on funding opportunities.	Strategic Housing Manager-SMDC	Mar 2014	-Explore opportunities for future funding SPHP from Crisis through Crisis and/ or Homeless Transition Fund -Through local authorities joint working & HPOG - Appraise costs and benefits of pooling resources with Community Safety for low level Sanctuary	Increased funding and services	
Evaluate existing 'move on' arrangements, demand and take up in order to ensure that move on from supported accommodation is effective and timely.	Strategic Housing Manager-SMDC	Dec 2013	-Review with partner agencies	Increased customer satisfaction with their ability to move on from supported accommodation when they are ready Improved availability of supported housing to those who need it most.	
Develop a multi agency response to housing related debt and mortgage / tenancy repossession	Revenue s and Benefits Manager -SMDC	March 2014	Review of all services in line with Homelessness Directorate good practice	Early intervention for with debt related housing problems due to unemployment or financial hardship Number of homelessness preventions	

**Strategic Priority 2: Working in partnership to prevent homelessness**

Task	Lead Officer /Agency	By when	Milestones	Outcomes/ performance measures	Progress
Review MHA and other registered providers Eviction prevention protocol	Homelessness lead for each registered provider	March 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Key Registered provider partners to have homelessness action plans and homelessness champions</li> <li>-Develop ways of addressing under occupation and reducing evictions from social tenancies.</li> <li>Establish how potentially homeless tenants who are victims of domestic abuse are dealt with</li> <li>-Housing of 16 &amp; 17 year olds protocol agreed</li> <li>- Procedures agreed for Advice offered to people entering remand or prison</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Action plan development and delivery, improved prevention of homelessness in Housing Association accommodation</li> <li>-Reduced evictions from social housing</li> <li>-Improved services for victims of domestic abuse</li> <li>-Improved homelessness prevention</li> <li>-Increased housing options for young people</li> <li>-Improved advice and information for Housing Association tenants to improve homelessness prevention</li> </ul>	
Work more closely with Children's Services and explore the possibility of joint assessments to identify housing and support needs.	Revenues and Benefits Manager -SMDC	Mar 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Implement &amp; monitor YP protocol</li> <li>-Discuss and agree local arrangements</li> <li>-Implement Young Persons Operational Group</li> </ul>	Improved partnership working to address/ prevent homelessness	

### Strategic Priority 3: Mitigating the impacts of Welfare Reforms and the Localism Act

Task	Lead Officer /Agency	By when	Milestones	Outcomes/ performance measures	Progress
Identify specific households whose homes will be put at risk by the reforms and work with these households to prevent homelessness	Revenue s and Benefits Manager -SMDC	Dec 2012	-Data collection completed -Customers contacted and offered housing advice -Monitor changes to legislation and emerging Government policy & analyse impacts	Homelessness prevention	
DHP and equivalent Council Tax Discount Scheme (CTDS) Fund assists those families most in need	Revenue s and Benefits Manager -SMDC	Mar 2013	Review relevant procedures	Reduced housing debt and increased homelessness prevention Uptake of DHP & CTDS benefit fund	
Develop protocols for registered providers to ensure good quality appropriate free advice and assistance is offered by registered providers to tenants who may face rent shortfalls under affordable rents and at review or ending of fixed term tenancies.	Registere d providers homeless ness leads	Mar 2014	Establish current RP and best practice Produce Protocol Implement Protocol	Good quality appropriate free advice and assistance available  Increased homelessness Preventions	

### Strategic Priority 4: Increasing the availability of affordable housing

Task	Lead Officer /Agency	By when	Milestones	Outcomes/ performance measures	Progress
Improve private sector access for people in homeless or housing need	Strategic Housing Manager-SMDC	March 2013	Develop and commission PRS initiative	Landlords and tenants have access to advice and support when needed. Increased housing options Increased number of private tenancies available Increased homelessness prevention Customer and landlord satisfaction	
Use PRS for discharging homelessness duty	Revenue s and Benefits Manager -SMDC	Dec 2012	-SMDC Cabinet agree parameters and standards -Implement -Quarterly monitoring re tenancy sustainment	Increased number of people accessing and sustaining private sector tenancies.	
Seek to develop new housing options for younger people (16-35 years)	Strategic Housing Manager-SMDC	Mar 2014	Through PRS initiative  Review with RPs opportunities to commission supported accommodation  Develop 'spare room' scheme/ info. pack, consult with legal dept license agreement, advertise and promote.	No. of shared accommodations created  No. of rooms let  SPHP target of 15 tenancies p.a. met  Homelessness preventions	
Address the needs of Gypsy and Travellers.	Regeneration Manager-SMDC	March 2014	Options appraisal  Potential sites identified	Provision of sites Homelessness preventions	

### Strategic Priority 4: Increasing the availability of affordable housing

Task	Lead Officer /Agency	By when	Milestones	Outcomes/ performance measures	Progress
Increase the supply of affordable housing in the District	Strategic Housing Manager-SMDC	Mar 2015	-Work with Ascent LLP to develop 370 homes by 2015 under the Affordable Homes Programme. -Work with developers -Completion of Housing Needs Surveys to support planning applications	Number of affordable homes local PI  Homelessness preventions	
Review use of temporary accommodation	Strategic Housing Manager-SMDC	Dec 2013	Complete review & new options confirmed	Improved provision of temporary accommodation and related services to meet identified needs and fill gaps in provision -Reduced time households spend in temporary accommodation -Reduced multiple temporary accommodation placements -Reduced use of B&B -Customer satisfaction	
Ensure that local people on low incomes in housing need can access RDBS to secure accommodation in the private rented sector	Revenue s and Benefits Manager -SMDC	Nov 2012	-Redevelop inspection criteria with Housing Standards Team & apply 'suitability' requirements for discharging homelessness duty into the PRS	Increased number of private tenancies available. Increased homelessness preventions Number of people accessing and sustaining private rented accommodation.	

#### Key

SMDC Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, internal depts. HB – Housing Benefits, CT – Council Tax

SCC- Staffordshire County Council

HPOG- Housing Policy Officers Group (attended by Staffordshire local authority's strategic housing)

SPHP –Young Persons Housing Project

MHA- Moorlands Housing Association

IY (SHM) - Ian Young – Strategic Housing Manager

