

## CONSULTATION FEEDBACK EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

### Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the comments and feedback received during the consultation period. The final stage public consultation commenced on the 9th January 2018 and closed on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2018. All comments have been analysed and will be used to inform the strategy implementation action plan. A full summary of the feedback from the consultation will be published alongside the Homelessness Strategy.

### Summary

232 consultees responded to the online survey and 6 different types of organisations also responded to our online survey including representatives from local authorities, police, probation, healthcare, voluntary sector (including homelessness charities) and housing associations.

Of the individual responses 37% were people that are homelessness or have been homeless in the past 37%. Those at risk of becoming homeless now and in the past made up 20% of respondents.

In terms of ages of people who completed the survey:

1	under 18	0.0%
2	18-24	11.9%
3	25-34	25.4%
4	35-54	42.1%
5	55+	20.6%

Whilst no-one under 18 years of age completed the survey, a specific focus group was held to talk to young people who have been in care or experienced homelessness to ensure that their views have been taken into account

In addition to the consultation and Focus Groups, the draft strategy has also been to the Health and Wellbeing board for discussion and feedback.

Of the organisations responding to the survey or attending the focus groups this included agencies that supported or represented the following specific client groups:

- Families
- Young people (16-17)
- Young people (18-24)
- Care leavers
- Older people
- Ex-offenders
- People with Mental Health/disabilities
- People with Physical disabilities
- People with alcohol dependency
- People with drug dependency
- People experiencing domestic violence
- Rough sleepers

### **Service Demand**

73% of all responders considered that demand on the service from those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness will increase over the next 5 years

### **Main Risk**

The cost of housing was overwhelmingly ranked as the number one risk of homelessness.

**Strategic priorities** - Overall there was strong support for the strategic priorities set within the draft homelessness strategy:

<b>To prevent homelessness, we propose that the strategy should focus on the following four objectives below. Do you agree with our four strategic objectives?</b>				
		<b>Agree (%)</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree (%)</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
1	<b>Early identification and prevention of homelessness</b>	88	11	1
2	<b>Achieving positive outcomes for our young people</b>	86	13	1
3	<b>Increasing access to and supply of accommodation</b>	87	10	3
4	<b>Achieving positive outcomes: improving health, wellbeing and supporting vulnerable people</b>	89	10	1

### **Key Themes from feedback**

<b>General Comments</b>	
Clear targets should be set to reduce rough sleeping and the use of temporary accommodation	Targets are already set in these areas and will continue to be reviewed, monitored and published through the annual action plan.
Fraudulent activity should be tackled to focus services on those most at risk	The Council is committed to actively tackling fraudulent activities and ensure assessment of need is robust to identify and tackle any cases of fraudulent activity whilst effectively supporting those most at risk. The range of actions taken will be set out in the action plan.
Disabilities – ensuring access to suitable accommodation	Noted: The strategy seeks to ensure that accommodation secured is suitable to meet needs. Current planning requirements include requirements on the provision of accessible/adapted accommodation.
Working in partnership is important – the Council taking a leadership and coordination role is welcome	Noted: Partnership working is integral to the success of the Homelessness Strategy and this will continue to be an overarching priority throughout the term of the new Housing Strategy.

<b>Priority 1 – Early identification and prevention of homelessness</b>	
<b>Feedback</b>	<b>Response</b>
The need to understand and work with homeless people in order to understand their needs and best assist them	Noted – the strategy emphasises a focus on working with people who have experienced or are at risk of homelessness, to both inform future service provision and work with individuals to help them resolve their housing difficulty. In line with the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act a personal plan is developed with everyone who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to jointly agree on all actions that need to be taken to resolve their housing difficulty. A dedicated worker will then oversee delivery of the personal plan until the situation is resolved. The high proportion of people responding to the consultation who have experienced or have been at risk of homelessness has assisted in developing the action plan.
Universal Credit – monitor impact of welfare reform. Engage and support those who will be moving to Universal Credit	Noted. A dedicated team are in place to work proactively to support people through the transition to universal credit. The team work in partnership with the job centre plus and advice agencies. The impact of welfare reform continues to be monitored closely. Specific range of initiatives will be set out within the delivery action plan.
Communication is essential but it needs to be more than on-line. A range of leaflets, face to face	Agreed. Pages 38-41 set out the commitment to ensuring that the right advice is provided at the right time. This must include ensuring advice is accessible in terms of the location and format it is delivered.
Early identification is key	This is a key priority with the Homelessness Strategy with a wide range of initiatives included within the delivery action plan. This seeks to ensure that any early identification takes place of any factors which may lead to potential homelessness and that effective advice, signposting and support is provided in a timely way to maximise the success of prevention actions and assist people to either remain in their home or access settled and sustainable housing.
<b>Priority 2 – Achieving positive outcomes for young people</b>	
<b>Feedback</b>	<b>Response</b>
Ensure actions focus on those at greatest risk	
Ensure support is provided to care leavers to manage tenancies including money advice	Noted This is already included as a priority within the strategy with greater emphasis on support and training to be able to manage tenancies. The action plan will set out in more detail the range of support provided and ongoing money management.

Education – better support to access jobs/employment. Schools should education children to reduce the risk of homelessness	Noted the Homelessness Strategy has a key focus on education and working with schools to help reduce the risk of homelessness. Pages 44-47 set out the overarching priorities for this area of work.
It is not just about the young people but supporting families and parents	Agreed the action delivery plan will set out the commitment to assisting both young people and their families.
<b>Priority 3 – increasing access to and the supply of accommodation</b>	
<b>Feedback</b>	<b>Response</b>
Private Rented Sector – ability to make payments and rental guarantees to increase the number of landlords prepared to take tenants in receipt of benefits. The quality of accommodation is also key.	The Homelessness Strategy (pp38-58) sets out the approach to helping people to access the private rented sector. This will be expanded upon within the delivery action plan. It includes a range of initiatives to work with private landlords to improve the quality and access to accommodation, together with practical assistance such as deposits and essential households items.
Private Rented Sector – not affordable to many. Landlords should reduce rents and rent controls should be put in place.	Whilst Private Sector Accommodation is not affordable for everyone it does provide an alternative housing solution for those who can afford it with some support. This may be the only independent housing solution for people who would not be considered as having a high or priority need for social housing under the current legislation. Close work does take place with landlords and in many cases this can assist in agreeing rents at an affordable level. The Council also offers a number of rental guarantee and deposit schemes to assist in accessing the private rented sector. Rents controls are not within the Council's control or scope of the homelessness strategy. Such measures would require legislative changes.
More emphasis should be put on affordable housing requirements when planning applications are approved. Ensure developers supply the required percentage of affordable housing.	Noted – no change to the strategy. The Councils planning policy requirements for affordable housing are published on the Council's website. Viability assessments are required on all sites in the event that the required proportion of affordable housing cannot be secured on site and this is considered as part of the planning application.
Need to increase the supply of local affordable housing	Notes – no change. The focus on the strategy is to prevent homelessness and increase the supply and access to housing across all sectors of the market to meet housing need. This includes maximising access to affordable housing. The forthcoming housing strategy will also explore this in more detail.

Empty homes	The Council does run a scheme to bring empty homes back into use. In some cases this can create opportunities for direct nominations format he council one homes ready to let. Options to tackle empty homes is outside the scope of the homelessness strategy but will be considered in more detail within the wider forthcoming housing strategy.
Homeshare schemes	Noted. The action plan will include an action to explore the potential to develop a homeshare scheme.
Greater emphasis on settled accommodation rather than Temporary Accommodation	Noted that strategy is committed to improving access to settled accommodation. Where temporary accommodation has to be used the strategy aims to ensure that this accommodation is of a good quality.
Ensure Temporary Accommodation where has to be used is of good quality	Agreed. The strategy sets out a number of aims around the provision of temporary accommodation. This includes ensuring that all accommodation is of an appropriate standard and meets the households' needs. The visiting outreach team has specifically been set up to be able to better monitor the quality of accommodation provided.
Moves to areas where housing is more affordable, in greater supply	This is included within the strategy.
Regular visit to those in temporary accommodation to understand what happens next and rehousing options that may be available.	Noted: the strategy sets out a priority to increase contact with those in temporary accommodation through the development of the visiting outreach team.
<b>Priority 4 - Achieving positive outcomes: improving health, wellbeing and supporting vulnerable people</b>	
<b>Feedback</b>	<b>Response</b>
Tenant ready training	No change – the strategy already includes support to people to ensure they are able to sustain tenancies as a key priority including tenant ready schemes'. The action plan will set out in more detail how we intend to expend on the training already offered.
Better support and integration of ex-service persons back into society	Noted: Pages 52-58 sets out the overarching priorities for providing early advice and support. Specific actions will be contained within the delivery action plan. This will include developing closer working relationships with organisations working with ex-service persons to improve explore options to improve the level of homelessness prevention.
Better support and provision for those leaving prison	Noted. There is already a dedicated role within the housing options service to support those being discharged from prison. This includes a regular

	surgery through probation and floating support to assist ex-offenders to secure accommodation and gain the support required to abstain from reoffending.
Greater support with follow up	Already in the strategy
Mental health. Key that Mental health support is provided and suitable supported accommodation	Supported needs are assessed at point of contact and referrals made to relevant support services or supported housing schemes. Ongoing works continues to take place to ensure close joint working takes place between housing and mental health colleagues. Surgeries are also undertaken at Green Parks house to ensure that housing pathway is developed and in place before discharge this includes assessing both housing and support needs. The strategy aims to expand on this work as a key priority to both reducing homelessness and ensuring that people are able to sustain their home in the longer term. Pages 54-56 summarise the key approaches to ensuring appropriate and timely support.
Improving access to training and education – tackling the route causes	Assessments consider all of the issues which may have led to homelessness. The strategy focuses on a holistic approach to look at all measures which not only resolve homelessness but any underlying factors which could make a household at risk of future homelessness. This includes a wider range of activities include for example accessing education, training and employment, debt and money management and so forth.
Training GPs	This is included within the priority actions identified within the strategy. A health needs audit has been undertaken which feeds into the homelessness strategy. Part of this work includes working with GPs to enable them to better identify factors which could risk homelessness and how to effectively sign post to support and advice.
Engage with businesses	To be included within the delivery action plan. Improving access to education and employment is a key priority to reduce the risk of homelessness
Ensuring access to healthcare	The strategy sets out a commitment to working with health colleagues both to improve access to healthcare and also to ensure identification of factors which could lead to homelessness to enable early prevention work to take place.
Money management and debt advice is key	The provision of money management and debt advice is a key priority (Pages 57 and 58). There is a money management and debt advice service.