

MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL

Equality Impact Assessment

Title of Policy/Service/Contract: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for the period 2020 - 2025

Division: Assistant Chief Executive. Housing.

Lead Officer: Samantha Horne/Emma Shuttleworth

Date Assessment completed: November 2019

1. SCOPING

1.1 What are the aims of the policy, service/service change or contract?

The strategy relates to the delivery of the Council's responsibilities regarding homelessness and rough sleeping. The Strategy sets out five objectives and associated actions to address homelessness and rough sleeping in the District over the next 5 years:

- Preventing and relieving homelessness
- Minimise the use of and improve temporary accommodation.
- Prevent recurring homelessness
- Tackle rough sleeping and homelessness amongst specific vulnerable groups
- Enable access to affordable and suitable accommodation.

1.2 Who does the service/policy/contract affect? Who are the main customers (internal or external)?

People who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. People in the District who are rough sleeping. Those seeking housing advice and people in housing need. This affects in the main people on low to modest incomes. Homelessness also disproportionately affect people who are vulnerable due to physical or mental disability, learning disabilities, those suffering domestic violence, young people, older people, ex-offenders and substance misusers.

Other vulnerable people requiring housing related support and/or accommodation.

Key partners involved in the delivery of the strategy include housing associations, private landlords and letting agents. Other external stakeholders include West Sussex County Council, Sussex Police, the Probation Service, Clarion Housing Association, Peabody as well as other social housing providers in the district, Southdown Housing, Citizens Advice and WORTH Services.

Internal partners within the Council include the Revenues and Benefits Service, Corporate Estates, Legal, Finance and the Housing Standards Team.

1.3 What equality information is available, including any evidence from engagement and analysis of use of services?

A review of homelessness in Mid Sussex has been completed with detailed information regarding the client group dealt with by the Housing Needs service. This includes breakdowns of the ethnicity of those approaching the Housing Needs Team for advice and the priority need category of those accepted as homeless.

Information is provided from West Sussex County Council on young people in the District assisted by the Youth Homelessness Prevention Team and Leaving Care

Service. The review includes an assessment of the affordability of rented accommodation in the social and private sector.

A consultation exercise has been undertaken to inform the Strategy, which has involved partner organisations connected to homelessness and rough sleeping in Mid Sussex, such as the YMCA, Turning Tides, mental health groups, the Police, the Department of Works and Pensions, Probation Service, Housing Associations and Furnihelp. There has also been a web survey available on the Council's website.

1.4 What does this information tell us about the equality issues associated with the service and implications for the protected groups?

Monitoring of those approaching the Council for housing advice and are then accepted as homeless by ethnicity does not show any marked differences with that of the background population in Mid Sussex.

The number of approaches from people who have identified that they are from the Gypsy and Traveller community is relatively few, although this may reflect some under reporting as those seeking housing advice may not self-identify in all instances. The service deals with a high proportion of vulnerable people, especially due to old age, physical disability and mental illness. Of those accepted as homeless in 2018/19, 63% had a vulnerability. A lack of access to affordable accommodation is a major factor for people on low incomes and supported by benefits. The homelessness review found a high incidence of mental health needs amongst those approaching the Council who are threatened with homelessness. Domestic abuse is also a significant factor in reasons for people seeking housing advice from the Council (8% of approaches in 2018/19).

1.5 Are contractors or partnerships used to deliver the service? Y/N

If No go to section 2.

If yes, please refer to the guidance notes for completing impact assessments and complete the next three questions.

Identify the contractors/partnerships used to deliver the service.

There are a number of services that the Housing Needs Team works with to prevent homelessness which are procured through West Sussex County Council or countywide partnerships. Clarion provides access to temporary accommodation and manages the Common Housing Register on behalf of the Council. Other temporary accommodation is provided by Sussex Oakleaf HA and where necessary procured on a nightly basis from privately run guest house and bed and breakfast establishments.

Turning Tides provides support to rough sleepers and to those at risk of rough sleeping in the district.

Citizens Advice provide a Homelessness Prevention & Money Advice Service

What is their contribution to equality in service delivery and the promotion of equality?

Partner organisations support the activities of the Housing Needs Team in preventing homelessness amongst often vulnerable people and through supporting people who need temporary accommodation or are rough sleeping. Clarion's Homemove Team ensures that social housing is allocated in accordance with the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme. The scheme is designed to ensure allocations are based on housing need and that all applicants are treated fairly and in a transparent way. Citizens Advice aim to prevent homelessness where possible through the timely intervention of debt and money advice for people at risk of losing their homes through rent or mortgage arrears. Turning Tides support those who are rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping to make sustainable changes to their lives to enable them to move away from rough sleeping.

How are equality issues addressed through contractual arrangements and service level agreements?

The SLA with Clarion sets out equal opportunities expectations and requires the contractor to monitor its work and the outcomes, e.g. who gets housed

2. Assessment of Impact; Analysis and Action Planning

Any gaps in information or provision, opportunities to promote equalities and good relations identified above need to be translated into SMART actions and recorded here. These actions need to be delivered and monitored through the service planning process.

Opportunity to promote equality, good relations and/or address barriers to service/differential impact	Current action taken to address these	Further actions required and timescales	Lead Officer	How will impact be measured
The needs of different ethnic groups including white minorities, but also established white communities				
BME groups may be disadvantaged in terms of accessing housing service. This includes the Gypsy and Traveller community.	Analysis is undertaken of the ethnicity of those seeking housing advice in comparison with census information on their makeup (see the review of Homelessness). Also of the Housing Register and lettings.	Support for the work required to meet the District Plan requirements to provide 23 additional pitches by 2031.	BUL for Housing Services	Number of new pitches provided.
The needs of men and women. Including taking account of pregnancy and maternity.				
Homelessness may be caused by women and men suffering domestic abuse.	Households subject to domestic abuse are referred to the relevant support service, such as WORTH, which provides immediate support for high risk cases and the Stonham Outreach Service which supplies long-term floating support. We also input to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) which consider how individual domestic violence cases can be best managed.	None identified.		
The needs of disabled people				
<p>The availability of wheelchair accessible temporary accommodation for those who need it.</p> <p>There is a high incidence of mental health needs amongst those approaching the Council who are threatened with homelessness.</p>	<p>Wheelchair accessible hotel temporary accommodation is procured when necessary.</p> <p>Designated temporary housing is provided in the District by Sussex Oakleaf HA, who provides an intensive housing management service for vulnerable people who may have mental health issues.</p> <p>The Housing Needs Team works with mental health services and the Community Mental Health Teams and with WSCC's Housing Co-ordinator through the multiagency Mental Health and Housing Liaison Group.</p>	<p>The project to procure the Council's own temporary accommodation includes provision of wheelchair accessible units – by April 2020.</p> <p>Mental health training to be provided to the Housing Needs Team by April 2021 to assist with relevant assessments.</p>	<p>BUL for Housing Services</p> <p>Housing Needs Team Manager</p>	<p>Number of units of wheelchair accessible temporary accommodation in the District.</p> <p>Number of Disabled Facilities Grants provided.</p>

	Disabled Facilities Grants are provided to enable adaptations to allow households to remain in their own homes.			
The needs of people with a religion or belief				
None identified.				
The needs of gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and heterosexual people				
None identified.	Services for those suffering domestic abuse are available to those in same sex and heterosexual relationships.	None identified.		
Issues from marriage and civil partnership				
None identified.	Same sex partnerships are considered the same as heterosexual ones in assessing housing need.	None identified.		
The needs of different age groups, for example older and younger people				
Prevention of homelessness amongst young people who are especially vulnerable to becoming homeless and sometimes reluctant to come to the Council's offices. Young and single people are more likely to be rough sleepers.	Countywide WSCC Youth Homelessness Prevention Scheme in place for homeless 16/17 year olds, including mediation, emergency accommodation and long-term housing support. Joint Working Protocol for dealing with Care Leavers in place between WSCC and District and Borough Councils. Rough sleepers are assisted through Turning Tides outreach service who are jointly commissioned with other West Sussex District and Borough Councils.	Further measures to address rough sleeping such as: looking to establish a Rough Sleeper Forum by April 2021, bidding for future funding to provide accommodation for rough sleepers in cold weather.	Housing Needs Team Manager	Rough sleeper count numbers
The needs of transgender communities				
None identified.				
The needs of people who are disadvantaged by socio-economic factors such as low incomes, skill or living in a deprived area				
Homelessness applications and requests for housing advice are most common from people on low incomes. There is a lack of access to affordable social housing and affordable private	Working with the benefits section to ensure access to Discretionary Housing payments, including those who have been affected by welfare reforms such as the Benefit Cap and Universal Credit. The Housing Needs Team signposts to the crisis support available from	Delivery of further affordable homes.	Housing Enabling Team Manager	Number of new affordable home delivered. Numbers assisted to access the private

rented properties in the District.	<p>the WSCC Local Assistance Network and provides Food Bank tokens.</p> <p>Assistance through the Council's rent in advance and deposit guarantee scheme is provided to assist people to access the private rented sector. the Council also employs a Private Sector Tenancy Negotiator, to engage with private sector landlords who may be willing to offer tenancies to clients of the Housing Needs Team.</p> <p>The Housing Enabling Team works to negotiate the delivery of more affordable homes in the District.</p>			rented sector.
The needs of people who live in a rural area				
Those in rural areas may have difficulty in accessing the Oaklands office at Haywards Heath.	<p>The Housing Needs Team attends regular Help-Points sessions at Burgess Hill and East Grinstead. The team also carry out home visits when appropriate.</p> <p>Advice is made available on the Housing pages of the Council's website to provide housing advice services.</p>	None identified.		

3. Mid Sussex District Council Equality Impact Assessment Summary

Key Findings	Future Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Housing Needs Team deals with a range of often vulnerable people requiring housing advice. 63% of households accepted as homeless last year contained a vulnerable person. • Monitoring by ethnicity of those using the service does not suggest that the make-up of applicants is different from the background population. • Households facing homelessness due to domestic abuse are referred to support services such as WORTH and the Stonham Outreach Service when they are assisted by the Housing Needs Team. • There is a high incidence of mental health needs amongst those approaching the Council who are threatened with homelessness and rough sleepers. The support provided includes working with mental health services and the Community Mental Health Teams. • Young people facing homelessness are being effectively supported by the WSCC Youth Homelessness Prevention Service. • There is a general lack of access to rented accommodation in both the social and private rented sectors for people on low incomes/benefits. This is being exacerbated by the level of Local Housing Allowance, which makes most private rented accommodation unaffordable to those who rely on benefit for part or all of their rent. In addition, private landlords are increasingly unwilling to accept tenants in receipt of benefit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual monitoring of the ethnicity of those approaching the Council for housing advice and being accepted as homeless. • Further measures to identify landlords in the private rented sector to accept those in housing need. • Provision of more new affordable housing in the District. • Provision of additional wheelchair accessible temporary accommodation. • See the Homelessness Strategy 2020 – 2025 Action Plan for detailed actions.

4. Signing off this assessment and action plan

Signature
 Person undertaking the assessment

Date

Signature
 Head of Service

Date

Please send your completed impact assessment to Neal Barton for publication on the website.