

Information Digest



To: Service Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12 April 2021

Homelessness Strategy Action Plan Update

Councillor Mike Bowen
Portfolio Holder for Communities

Helen Core
Head of Housing Services

1. Reason for the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update in relation to progress against the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy (2018-22) Action Plan and provide information relating to the Homelessness Prevention Budget 2020/21.
- 1.2 The report will also inform Members of the impact of Covid 19 on this service area.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the contents of the report be noted.

3. Executive Summary

- 3.1 The Council receives a variety of homelessness grants from MHCLG. It is up to the Local Authority how they distribute this funding provided they meet with MHCLG's intended purpose; namely to assist with homelessness and prevention activity, and reduce or eliminate the use of emergency B&B.
- 3.2 The Council has funded initiatives outlined in section 7 previously and the 2020/21 expenditure is a continuation of this.
- 3.3 Partnership MHCLG grant funding applications have successfully secured additional funding from 2020/21 Domestic Abuse programme and Rough Sleeper Initiative.
- 3.4 The table in 6.2 provides a progress update relating to the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan (2018-22), the four key strategic priorities and associated aims.

4. How this report links to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 The strategy contributes to the Corporate Plan 2019-23 aim of helping to create a safer and healthier environment for our communities to live and work.

CLAIRE HAZELDENE
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Web Links and Background Papers

[Homelessness Review and Strategy 2018-2022](#)

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5. Introduction

- 5.1 The Homelessness Strategy was approved by Cabinet in April 2018, which set out the key priorities for the next four years (2018-2022). At the mid-way point in the four year Strategy, this report reflects on the progress made to date and focuses on the work to be undertaken in the next two years.
- 5.2 It also considers the funding allocation available to resource the key priorities and current performance against key national and local indicators.

6. Progress Against the Strategy

- 6.1 The Strategy sets out four key priorities in order to address and prevent homelessness over the next four years. It was intended that funded projects should meet with one or more of the strategic priorities, as set out below:-
- 1) To prevent homelessness through a comprehensive range of services
 - 2) Ensure suitable accommodation is available to address and prevent homelessness
 - 3) Improve the Private Rented Sector Offer
 - 4) Ensure sufficient support is available to address and prevent homelessness
- 6.2 In addition, associated aims were identified in order to determine the actions to be taken to deliver against the four strategic priorities. The table below provides a summarised update on progress made against the aims to date. A full detailed review of progress against actions will be undertaken and provided as part of the Strategy update in 2022.

KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	ASSOCIATED AIMS	PROGRESS MADE TO DATE / FURTHER WORK TO UNDERTAKE
To prevent homelessness through a comprehensive range of services	Ensure all households understand the housing options that are available to them by providing high quality service	Personalised Action plans are produced for all applicants as part of the process
	Implement the Homelessness Reduction Act. Develop positive housing pathways for young people and vulnerable adults with complex needs	This has been fully implemented Working with partners such as P3 to address more complex cases
	Continuously improve the homelessness prevention toolkit. There will be focus on: - enhancing partnership work through the development of agreements that set out and facilitate agreed best practice and exploring funding opportunities in order to maintain and enhance services. There will be also be focus on addressing the main causes of homelessness; helping households remain together where it is safe with mediation and supporting access to appropriate services, support and accommodation for those experiencing domestic abuse.	Partnership in place with P3 to address pending homeless issues Agreements in place to support victims of Domestic Violence and Sanctuary scheme with YHG Adullam (specialist provider of housing and support services) providing bond support and tenancy assistance

Ensure suitable accommodation is available to address and prevent homelessness	Increase the supply of affordable housing and maximise the use of existing housing	Home Options policy Nomination and s106 agreements on planning applications
	Ensure that repossession is the last resort	Call before you serve service (specialist service for landlords considering seeking possession)
	Minimise use of temporary accommodation	Minimised B&B usage by prioritising use of Stepping stones Winter Provision at Mount Cook
	Consider options for single people (including those aged under 35 years) and seek to address the gap in relation to young persons supported accommodation in the Staffordshire Moorlands through alternatives such as Nightstop. Maintain supported accommodation options and consider the impact of changing funding arrangements for supported accommodation.	Adulam project Bond scheme Ongoing work with supported accommodation providers to consider need and means to support delivery of supported accommodation
	Ensure vulnerable and homeless households are appropriately prioritised on the housing registers	Home Options Policy – regularly reviewed
Improve the Private Rented Sector Offer	Deliver a 'call before you serve' early intervention landlord service pilot	Pilot successfully completed so this is now "business as usual"
	Improve property & management standards through Landlord Accreditation Schemes, actively enforcing, establishing Landlord Forums consulting with landlords and building staff capacity to address illegal eviction	Landlord forum held November 2020 Call before you serve service
	Improve access to the private sector by commissioning services relating to both the Access to the Private Rented Sector and Single Persons Housing Projects, to secure provision of pre-tenancy training and tenancy support.	Partnerships in place with Addulam and Call Before You Serve
	Review policies and procedures relating to Rent Deposit Bond Schemes and Prevention Funds	These have now been reviewed
	Explore schemes that facilitate affordable shared accommodation	This hasn't been appropriate due to the ongoing pandemic – to be completed
Ensure sufficient support is available to address and prevent homelessness	Reduce rough sleeping	Please see section 9 of this report
	Mitigate the impacts of welfare reforms including Universal Credit through money, debt and budgeting support, digital assistance, stronger links with Credit Unions and work with agencies to increase access and options for employment opportunities	Dedicated resource directed to this initially to coincide with UC roll-out. This is now business as usual within Housing, Revenues & Benefits and Customer Services – review paper to be presented later in 2021.
	Ensure that vulnerable people can access support around various issues where it may impact upon the ability to maintain a home. This will include work to address the gap in tenancy support and access to furniture and white goods within the Staffordshire Moorlands.	Tenancy Sustainment Officer role commissioned Adulam post from 19/20 Work with Adulam and P3
	Improve support needs data collection, from Assessments and HCLIC monitoring, which can inform understanding and service commissioning	Reporting in line with MHCLG guidance and requirements, these are evolving regularly

7. Funding Allocation

7.1 The Homelessness Prevention total funding allocation available for the remainder of the Homelessness Strategy period (2020/21 and 2021/22), is detailed below:

- **£181,290** - Funding carried forward. This includes MHCLG (originally three year time limited 2017/20) ring fenced grant funding allocations of; 1) New Burdens to support implementation of Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 2) Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG)
- **£43,000** - Base budget contribution from the Council's General Fund (originating MHCLG core Homelessness Grant funding) for 20/21 only
- **£115,000** - Further unanticipated 2020/21 FHSG and Homelessness Reduction Grant allocations. Confirmed allocation of **£145,050** for Homeless Prevention Grant which replaced FHSG and Homeless Reduction Grant for 21/22
- **£1,650** – specific Homelessness funding as a result of the impact of Covid-19

	Previous Years funding unallocated	2020/21 Allocation	2021/22 Allocation	TOTAL
External Funding:				
New Burdens Funding (Homelessness Reduction) and Flexible Homelessness Support Grant	181,290	115,000	145,050	441,340
COVID Funding	-	1,650	-	1,650
Internal Funding: Homelessness Budget annual contribution	-	43,000	-	43,000
TOTAL*	181,290	159,650	145,050	485,990

**There are no specific time constraints on spending the grants.*

7.2 The intended purpose of the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant is to assist with homelessness and prevention activity, and reduce or eliminate the use of emergency B&B, particularly for periods over 6 weeks. As such, there is greater flexibility to move away from costly intervention when a household is already homeless, to prioritising preventing homelessness happening in the first place.

7.3 The aim of the Homelessness Prevention Budget is to support the delivery of services which will address, prevent and relieve homelessness and provide support to vulnerable households.

7.4 Funded projects should meet with one or more of the strategic priorities within the Council's Homelessness Strategy as set out in section 6.2.

7.5 The table below provides an outline of projected Homelessness Prevention funding allocations over the next two years, and which of the strategic priorities the funding allocation addresses:

Project Name	Strategic	Service Description	2020/21	2021/22	Total
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	Priority		Allocation	Allocation	budget commitment
Debt Advice Project (Citizens Advice) THIRD PARTY CONTRIBUTION	1, 4	Money, debt and budgeting advice project delivered to households that may be at risk of homelessness due to debt, rent or mortgage arrears	7,500	7,500 This is likely to continue	15,000
Single Persons Housing Project & Tenancy Sustainment Officer (Adullam contract 2 plus 1 year, 2019/22) THIRD PARTY CONTRIBUTION	1,2,3,4	Provides combination of services including pre tenancy training, rent bond assistance and tenancy support.	54,770	54,770	109,540
Discretionary Housing Payments top up INTERNAL ALLOCATION	1, 4	Top up funding for Discretionary Housing Payments 2020/21	-	10,000	10,000
Prevention Fund INTERNAL ALLOCATION	1, 2, 3	Financial assistance to those at risk of homelessness to enable households to retain or secure accommodation	5,000 This can be to reduce rental arrears or secure privately rented accommodation	10,000	15,000
New Advice Officer post (3 yr post 2018/21) INTERNAL CONTRIBUTION	3	Homeless Reduction Act and Universal Credit support post including management of temporary accommodation	5,870	Built into base budget	5,870
New Adviser post (3 yr post 19/22)	1	Includes administration of Home Options freeing housing adviser time.	4,910 – Currently vacant	-	4,910
Additional Housing Adviser hours (5hrs pw)	1	Housing and homelessness advice and assistance.	2,610	2,500	5,110
'Call Before You Serve' scheme THIRD PARTY CONTRIBUTION	Principally 3, also 1, 2 & 4.	Early intervention private sector landlord support service.	9,310	To be reviewed	9,310
Temporary accommodation provision	2	Costs associated with bringing online new temporary accommodation	0 – (inc Covid impact) No costs – so 0 and moved forward	30,000 Dependent on how Covid shapes priorities	30,000
B&B		Costs associated with B&B provision	40,000	10,000	50,000
Everybody in		Rough Sleeper Services	10,000	Dependent on Covid impact	10,000
Aldi Vouchers		Support for those in TA	100		100
Temporary Accommodation – Mount Cook		Winter provision for Rough Sleepers	2,890	2,900	5,790
Derbyshire Law Centre Project		Support to prevent evictions	8,250	8,250	16,500
			151,210	135,920	287,130

- 7.6 The causes of homelessness are complex, however the main reason associated with those accepted as homeless is predominantly the loss of a private sector tenancy.’ The work by the “Call before you serve” service aims to mediate between landlords and tenants before this stage is reached. In addition, we are hosting Landlord events with partners to support private landlords, especially given the increased protections afforded to tenants until 31st March 2021.
- 7.7 The projected spend for 2021/22 takes into account that the six-month notice period for private tenancies will end and so more customers will be approaching for assistance in maintaining or securing privately rented accommodation
- 7.6 The table below provides a summary of the commitments as listed above, identifying currently unallocated funding of £198,860

	£
Estimated available funding 2020/21 / 2021/22	485,990
Committed 2020/21 / 2021/22	(287,130)
As yet not committed	198,860

- 7.7 However, it must be acknowledged that there is uncertainty in respect of non-recurrent short term external MHCLG funding, and so some of the funding may need to be utilised in future years. This said, they have been very clear that they expect those at risk of street homelessness to be accommodated and assisted in preventing this wherever possible.
- 7.8 The headroom also affords opportunity to support the delivery of further services which will address, prevent and relief homelessness and provide support to vulnerable households. For instance the Rough Sleeper Strategy being developed by the Derbyshire and Staffordshire Moorlands Partnership shall identify needs and initiatives particular to rough sleeping.

Additional Funding – Partner Bids

- 7.9 In addition to MHCLG local authority allocated funding, several partnership applications have been made to available funding programmes. A North Staffordshire partnership bid with Stoke on Trent City Council, Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council and Glow secured £106,048 funding from the MHCLG 2020/21 Domestic Abuse Fund programme. The funding will support the continuation of a number of initiatives including;
- Existing Moorlands refuge bed spaces
 - Enhance accommodation with additional 2x2bh in community-based setting for families with complex needs/ male dependents or otherwise where refuge accommodation may be unsuitable or unavailable.
 - Maintain Moorlands refuge based specialised support for young people and children.
 - Domestic Abuse Advocate role to support Housing Advice Teams across the authority areas and customer access to appropriate accommodation and support.

7.10 Grant funding through the MHCLG 2020/21 Rough Sleeper Initiative has been secured through partnership bid with Derbyshire authorities including Staffordshire Moorlands D.C. The grant funding secures across ten local authority areas the following;

- Rough sleeper co-ordinators
- Rough sleeper outreach services to engage with rough sleepers, who may have multiple and complex needs, and move them off the street.
- Supported lettings workers to provide ongoing tenancy related support to rough sleepers assisted to move away from the street into accommodation or those that may be at risk of rough sleeping.
- Bi-monthly rough sleeper street counts allow the impact of services to be considered
- P3 commissioned service provider links with all Housing Advice teams (however named).

7.10 The outcome of MHCLG Cold Weather Fund 2019/20 funding application to secure accommodation and settlement packages for rough sleepers, in partnership with High Peak Borough Council and Derbyshire Dales District Council, is £1,540

7.11 A collective bid with other authorities within the home options partnership secured £152,000 through the Next Steps Accommodation Programme to deliver collaborative services over the winter and to enable those housed under Covid initiatives to be supported. This will:-

- Help people keep the accommodation they have been given
- Help people find accommodation and then help them stay in it
- Prevent future rough sleeping by using a multi-agency collaborative approach
- Each person allocated a Link Worker to provide consistent support coordinating across multiple services.
- Increase housing opportunities for offenders via Probation co-ordinator post
- Provide the necessary support to keep people in accommodation and prevent any next wave of rough sleeping.

8. Assessing performance

8.1 A number of new localised performance indicators were introduced to outline homelessness service activity under Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and incorporate MHCLG guidance. These include;

- % cases opened as Prevention Duty
- % cases opened as Relief Duty
- % cases closed positively under Prevention Duty
- % cases closed positively under Relief Duty

- 8.2 The percentage of initial homelessness applications opened at the Prevention Duty (threatened with homelessness) as opposed to Relief Duty (homeless) is not an absolute measure of service effectiveness. Nevertheless the earlier a person approaches in respect of their homelessness issue, the more likely it is that a solution to their housing difficulty can be secured, whether that may be to preserve existing accommodation or to secure alternative housing. As such the homelessness strategy action plan focuses on activity that may facilitate early intervention and prevention opportunities.
- 8.3 The percentage of homelessness applications resolved positively indicates a settled accommodation outcome and assistance to successfully preserve existing accommodation or to secure alternative housing.
- 8.4 These measures are used by MHCLG to allocate funding and so whilst not entirely useful are important to maintain. Additional narrative around these indicators will be included in performance reports going forward to afford more clarity.
- 8.5 A table showing performance since the inception of the strategy can be found at **ANNEX 1**. Performance has been impacted by the pandemic, necessitating a higher and lengthier use of temporary accommodation, coupled with an increase in people presenting at “relief” rather than “prevention” stages as relationships of all natures have broken down due to the pressures of lockdown.

9 Impact of Covid 19

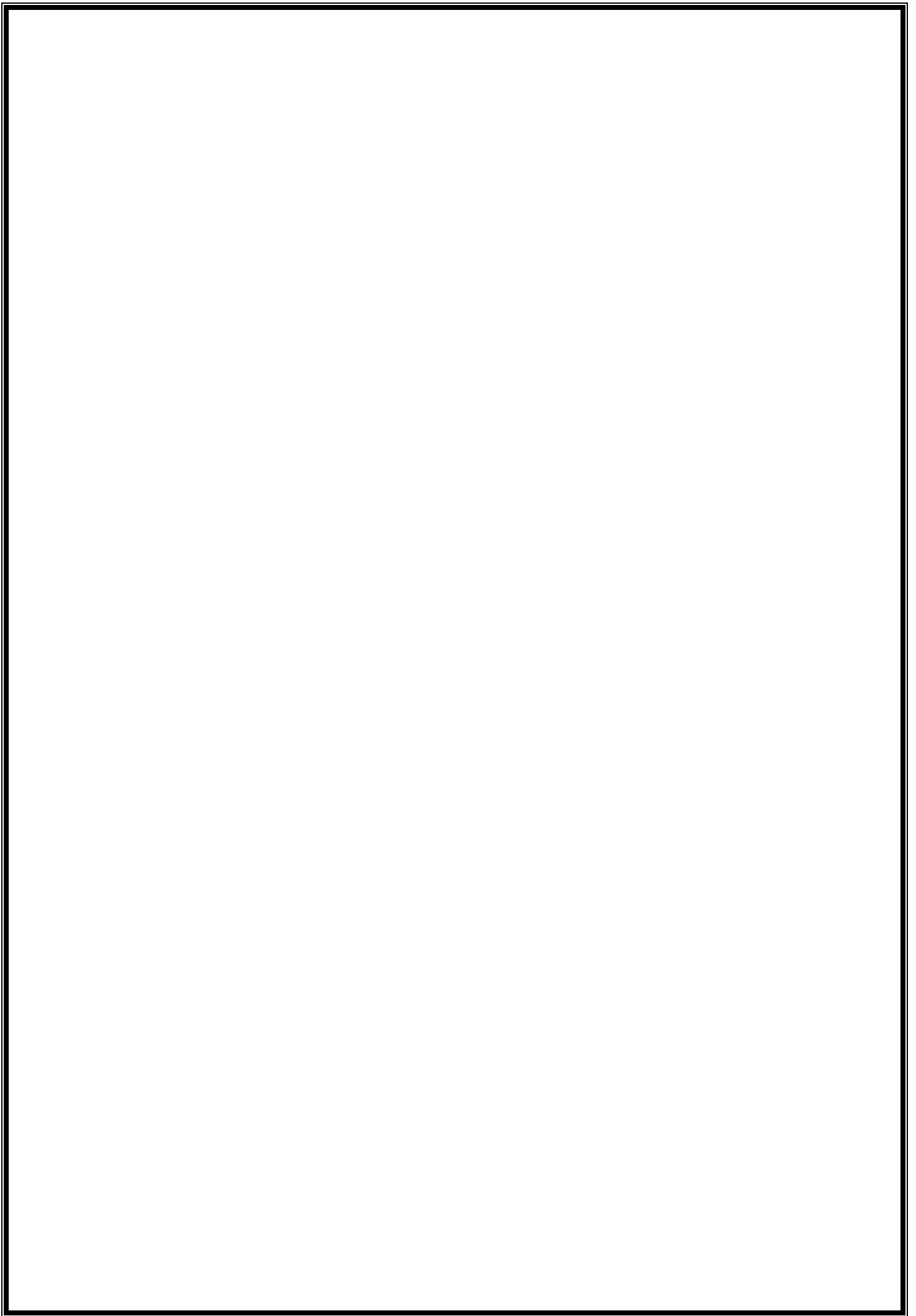
- 9.1 Covid 19 has unsurprisingly impacted the Homeless Team. In late March, the government announced the “Everyone In” initiative – designed to ensure rough sleepers had a safe space to isolate during the pandemic. Nationally there was a 90% take up on this.
- 9.2 The work of the Derbyshire and Staffordshire Moorlands Home Options partnership in tackling the “Everyone In” initiative has been recognised nationally as good practice.
- 9.3 Under this initiative 26 placements were made, all of whom have now been moved on positively. The total cost of this provision to date has been £42,917, of which £11,639 has been recouped through housing benefit and a further £1,650 through specific funding from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for this purpose.
- 9.4 In introduction of the tier system and subsequent lockdowns has led to a resurgence of the Everyone In initiative. In partnership with 5 other local authorities, the Council have commissioned Derby Christian Mission and YMCA to provide supported accommodation to prevent and assist rough sleepers at the “Mount Cook Adventure Centre”
- 9.6 This is funded from the £6,400 Cold Weather Fund allocation from MHCLG with the remainder of costs being covered by Housing Benefit (Administered

by DDDC due to the location of the provision) although current expenditure indicates an underspend.

- 9.7 This facility opened on 15th December as an alternative to B&B accommodation and HPBC / SMDC currently account for 8 of the 36 available bedspaces. Feedback from the project is hugely positive and the current occupation levels mean it is likely to be almost cost neutral. This provision is due to end on 31st March 2021.

10 Development of the Homelessness Strategy

- 10.1 The current Homelessness Strategy expires in 2022. Therefore, work will commence later in 2021 to fully review success against the existing Strategy and set the strategic objectives and action plan for the next four years.



ANNEX 1 Homelessness Performance

Measure of Success (PI)	Authority	Frequency	Result 2018/19	Result 2019/20	Target 2020/21	Jan-21
% of active housing register applicants who are in priority need (classes A and B) who have been registered in excess of 6 months.	SMDC	Annual	20.58%	7.69%	30%	TBC
NEW: % of initial homelessness applications opened at the prevention and relief duty stages	SMDC	Monthly	n/a	NEW	60%:40%	44% 56%
NEW: % of prevention duty discharges resulting in a settled accommodation outcome	SMDC	Monthly	n/a	NEW	62%	72.00%
NEW: % of relief duty discharges resulting in a settled accommodation outcome.	SMDC	Monthly	n/a	NEW	52%	60.00%
NEW: Total TA placements including number of B&B placements made for families	SMDC	Monthly	n/a	NEW	Contextual	14 (no families)
NEW: Number of TA placements (including B&B made for families) placed over 6 weeks	SMDC	Monthly	n/a	NEW	5	8 (no families)

Number of households in temporary accommodation:

SMDC	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Target
2018-19	11	10	9	7	12	11	10	9	11	11	14	11	15
2019-20	16	8	11	8	7	7	10	11	11	12	12	14	10
2020-21	24	20	10	11	12	9	14	18	21	14			