

A summary of responses to Cheshire East Council's

Vulnerable and Older People's Housing Strategy Consultation 2020

Summary and conclusions

Rating the strategy overall

Around half of respondents, 52%, rated the scope of the strategy as good overall, with the remainder rating it as average or not good.

General feedback on the strategy

Respondents generally agreed that the evidence base and findings in each of the sections was accurate, which is pleasing to see.

However, there was disagreement that the actions would be effective in achieving the priorities for each vulnerable group – having more effective actions may be the best way to improve the strategy overall.

Other general feedback on the strategy included that:

- Dementia should feature more prominently in the strategy, as it links to the older people, and mental health sections
- The term “vulnerable group” may be outdated and disempowering
- Clearer and more specific actions may be needed in the strategy.

Feedback for “older people”

The vulnerable group that elicited most feedback was “**older people**”, with 20 responses in total – this may reflect the fact that this group represents the largest cohort of people covered by the strategy e.g. there are many more people in Cheshire East who are elderly than who are homeless. This may also show that this group requires most consideration of all.

Few (4 out of 20) agreed the actions for this group will be effective in achieving the priorities – respondents felt there was no clear action plan for this vulnerable group.

Generally, respondents felt that “older people” should not be treated as one whole group, that housing needs to be made specifically for them, that a mix of housing in communities is vital, and that bungalows are essential. They also felt dementia needed to be given more consideration within the strategy.

Feedback for “mental health”

The next largest number of comments was for the group covered in the “mental health” section, and again respondents felt the actions here could be improved.

The main concerns for this group were around people being forced to move away from their home towns, and that people with dementia should be a bigger priority within the strategy.

Feedback for all other vulnerable groups

Each of the remaining vulnerable group section only received 7 or less responses each, and other than the actions being lower rated in each case, feedback was limited, and can be seen within the main report.

Level of response

Finally it is important to note that the number of responses to the consultation was fairly low.

Whilst consultations on lengthy strategy documents do struggle to achieve a high response, there is concern that feedback received is not representative of all stakeholders, and therefore not balanced – future consultation on this topic may need to be more engaging.

Contents

Summary and conclusions	2
Contents.....	4
Introduction	5
Overall views of the strategy	6
Number of responses by vulnerable group.....	7
Older people.....	8
Mental health.....	11
Domestic abuse	13
Physical and Sensory Disabilities.....	14
Learning Disabilities	15
Drug and Alcohol.....	16
Young People in Need	17
Cared for Children & Care Leavers	18
Homelessness.....	19
Respondent type	20

Report produced 28 August 2020 by Ryan Hackney and Ben Buckley of the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council, on behalf of Chris Hutton of Strategic Housing.

Email RandC@cheshireeast.gov.uk for information.

Introduction

Purpose of the consultation

In 2014 Cheshire East Council approved the Vulnerable and Older People's Housing Strategy, which summarised the housing needs of specific groups of people living in the borough.

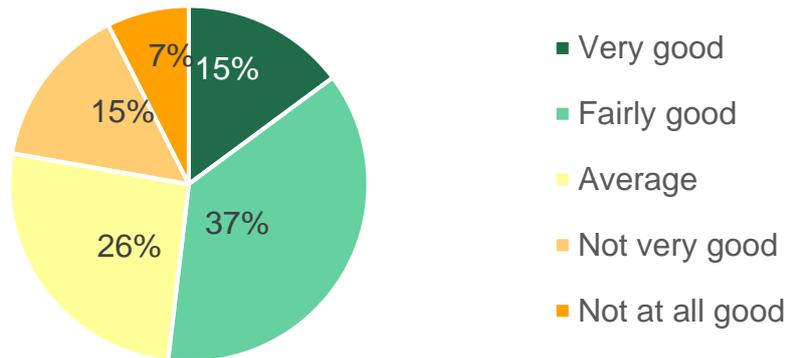
In 2019 the strategy was updated to reflect progress and changes since the strategy was first published, adopting lessons learned since the initial publication.

During June 2020, a survey was conducted to gauge what stakeholders thought about the updated strategy. The following report summarises responses to this survey – in total 32 people responded.

Overall views of the strategy

Overall just over half of respondents – 52% – felt the scope of the strategy was good. 22% felt it was not good, with the remaining 26% saying it was average.

Overall, how would you rate the scope of the strategy?



Number of responses = 27

Number of responses by vulnerable group

The updated strategy consisted of 9 different sections, with each section covering a different vulnerable group, providing evidence bases and priorities for each.

Respondents could choose which of the sections they wished to comment on in the consultation.

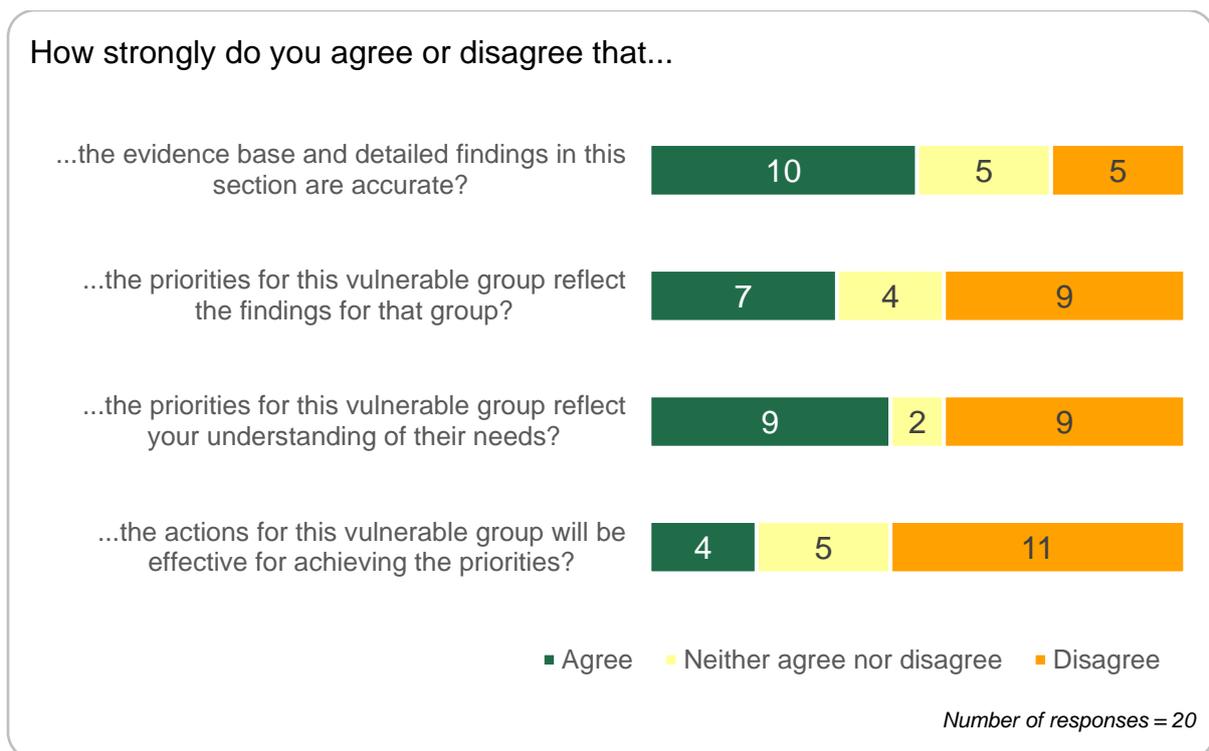
20 choose to comment on the “Older people” section, 9 on the “Mental Health” section, and 7 on the “Domestic abuse” section etc. – see below.

Vulnerable group	Number of responses
Older People	20
Mental Health	9
Domestic Abuse	7
Physical and Sensory Disabilities	6
Learning Disabilities	5
Drug and Alcohol	4
Young People in Need	3
Cared for Children & Care Leavers	3
Homelessness	3

Older people

This was the vulnerable group which had most feedback, with 20 responses in total.

Whilst half (10 out of 20) agreed the evidence base and findings for this group were accurate, less than half (9 out of 20) agreed the priorities for this vulnerable group reflect respondents' understanding of their needs, and just 4 out of 20 agreed the actions for this vulnerable group will be effective for achieving the priorities.



Respondents made a number of comments relating to this vulnerable group, these have been summarised under the below headings.

Older people:

- Older people are not all the same at a given age and thus should not be just grouped by age
- Older people aren't necessarily vulnerable – it might be helpful to separate the two groups. Some are more marginalised than others
- The starting age for accommodation should not be 55, it should start when someone is receiving their state pension, unless they have disabilities and are not working

- The chapter does not seem to acknowledge the increase in older people occupying social rented homes

Housing type:

- More affordable and social housing is needed for older people
- Specific schemes for older people are needed, with linked facilities e.g. community centres, care support, wardens etc
- A mix of housing in communities is essential - student accommodation, starter homes, family homes and post-family homes. CEC must do more to ensure this happens
- Bungalows are better than retirement flats, and make a valuable contribution towards the independence of the elderly
- Houses for older people need greater broadband provision
- People should not be forced to leave the area they have always lived in

Measuring success:

- How will you measure success of your strategy for this group?
- It doesn't really help to describe the problem in detail without coming up with an action plan
- We all agree what the problem is and we all know what the solution is - to build another 8,000 care places for our increasingly elderly population by 2030. However, there are no recommended actions in the report to address this challenge – there are no details of how many Council funded places are required out of that total, no details of how much this would cost and no details of how the costs could be met
- This document treats each group as a silo, I see no evidence of an integrated approach to addressing this issue in an holistic fashion.
- There is no evidence of a planning timeline for when these strategies will be implemented, or how they will be implemented.
- There is no communication plan in the strategy.

General comments on the strategy:

- There are research reports produced by the World Health Organisation, the Centre for Ageing Better and the HousingLIN which do not appear to have been considered
- I could not see a specific Dementia strategy incorporated in this document
- There is a demonstrable lack of evidence from within Cheshire East of the need or requirement for additional capacity in any sector of this type of care
- There is a lack of understanding and acknowledgement of the impact that additional provision has on the limited and already stretched health providers
- Developers modify schemes approved as over 55 provision to general housing, this could be viewed as a loophole in the system.

The consultation:

- Framing people as belonging to a 'vulnerable group' is outdated and disempowering. Since the implementation of the Care Act, this language should not be used for older people, or any of the other groups identified in this consultation
- I am not clear how well you have consulted older people. I couldn't find the ORS report, so I don't know how ORS consulted older people, and if they consulted a representative sample.

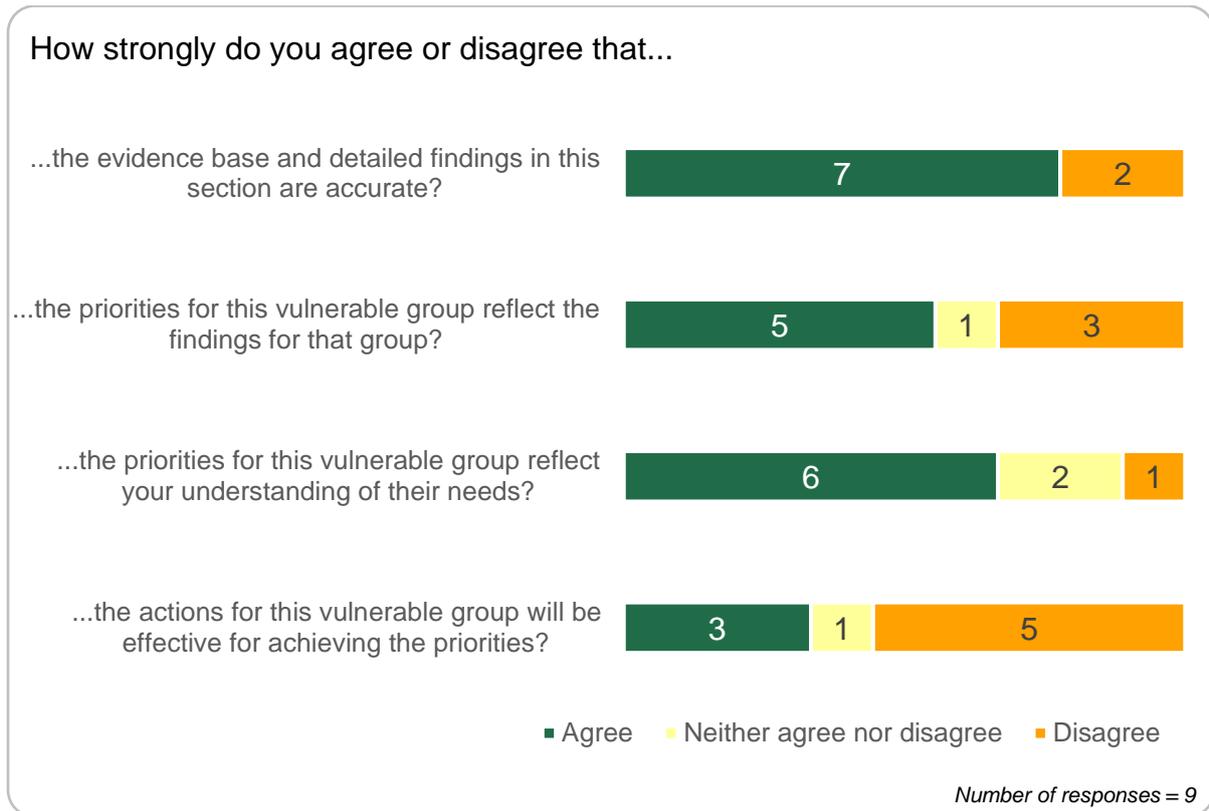
Care provision in the North of the borough:

- Care provision in Wilmslow, Alderley Edge and Handforth is well catered for, with perhaps an over provision in the private sector
- Analysis of the North of the Borough does not take into account provision and demand/supply in Stockport

Mental health

There were 9 responses for this vulnerable group.

Whilst a majority of respondents agreed the evidence base, findings and priorities were good, just 3 out of 9 agreed the actions for this vulnerable group will be effective for achieving the priorities.



Respondents made a number of comments relating to this vulnerable group, these have been summarised under the below headings.

Concerns about moving people to new locations:

- People with mental health, need to feel safe and secure – moving them away from their home town is not achieving that, it could result in more homelessness as you are taking them away a town they know and have friends
- When vulnerable people are rehoused in another location therapeutic activity and social inclusion often gets forgotten.

People with dementia need to be given more consideration:

- The numbers of those with dementia are grossly understated by a factor of 10+. Dementia should either be given a specific separate section of the strategy, or included in the older people section, since the great majority of those living with dementia are 65+
- Consider adaptation needs for housing to make it dementia-friendly – it is a lot cheaper to engineer dementia-friendliness into new builds than to backfit into existing housing.

Other comments:

- For vulnerable people decision making can prove difficult, a greater understanding of this is required, especially by Primary Care Health Service providers (NICE Guidelines 2020)
- Fathers do not appear to get parity with mothers in terms of domestic abuse refuge. Fathers that may have pre-existing mental health issues that want to maintain parenting access
- There is a lack of mental health advocacy services available Cheshire East especially relating to Welfare Benefit issues and claims
- CEC do not do enough training and education around Mental Health first Aid Matters (see www.changesplus.co.uk)
- There is not enough community collaboration and co-production – who is The Sandbach Partnership for example, who are they partnering with, and with what outcomes?

Domestic abuse

There were 7 responses for this vulnerable group.

Similar to previous groups, whilst a majority agreed the evidence base, findings and priorities were good, smaller proportions felt the actions for this vulnerable group will be effective for achieving the priorities.

How strongly do you agree that...	No. that agree
...the evidence base and detailed findings in this section are accurate?	6 out of 7
...the priorities for this group reflect the findings for that group?	5 out of 7
...the priorities for this group reflect your understanding of their needs?	6 out of 7
...the actions for this group will be effective for achieving the priorities?	4 out of 7

Respondents made the following comments relating to this vulnerable group:

- Action to address the causes of Domestic Abuse is also required otherwise the numbers are sadly only going to increase
- A concern is the 'short term' nature of much of this provision when those with complex intersecting needs often require longer interventions to become fully independent
- Domestic abuse should also be seen as a thread throughout the other areas identified
- Victims of Domestic Abuse should be made to feel safe within 12 hours of seeking help, making sure the abuser does not enter the property
- The chapter does not contain any data for DA experienced by older people. In my experience there are additional barriers for older adults who experience DA which result in under reporting and not being aware of support or accessing available services
- There is a good understanding of needs and numbers, but little else in the way of actions
- Older people, people with mental health issues, transgender people, people with significant financial issues, those with pets and larger families are often challenging to accommodate. Appropriate and flexible provision is essential.

Physical and Sensory Disabilities

There were 6 responses for this vulnerable group.

Similar to previous groups, whilst a majority agreed the evidence base, findings and priorities were good, smaller proportions felt the actions for this vulnerable group will be effective for achieving the priorities.

How strongly do you agree that...	No. that agree
...the evidence base and detailed findings in this section are accurate?	4 out of 6
...the priorities for this group reflect the findings for that group?	4 out of 6
...the priorities for this group reflect your understanding of their needs?	4 out of 6
...the actions for this group will be effective for achieving the priorities?	2 out of 6

Respondents made the following comments relating to this vulnerable group:

- The needs and welfare are not outlined sufficiently, especially of the working age group with disabilities and sensory loss
- Houses should be built for life and developers forced to provide homes that owners can have for their whole lifetime, once they purchased their property.
- There is lots of data, the problem is recognised, but there is little else. Lots of "we need more research", but nothing to say how the research will be used and, more significantly, when physical work will be undertaken to address this problem

Learning Disabilities

There were 5 responses for this vulnerable group.

Similar to previous groups, whilst a majority agreed the evidence base, findings and priorities were good, smaller proportions felt the actions for this vulnerable group will be effective for achieving the priorities.

How strongly do you agree that...	No. that agree
...the evidence base and detailed findings in this section are accurate?	5 out of 5
...the priorities for this group reflect the findings for that group?	3 out of 5
...the priorities for this group reflect your understanding of their needs?	4 out of 4
...the actions for this group will be effective for achieving the priorities?	2 out of 5

Respondents made the following comments relating to this vulnerable group:

- They need to stay as close as their town, families and friends, and not asked to be rehoused in another town miles away
- The cost of housing, affordability and availability for this client group should be included in the strategy (Social Housing Provision)
- The issue of housing to support those with learning difficulties as they transition from a family home to shelter is not clearly articulated. It is difficult to identify a clear plan.

Drug and Alcohol

There were 4 responses for this vulnerable group.

Similar to previous groups, whilst a majority agreed the evidence base, findings and priorities were good, smaller proportions felt the actions for this vulnerable group will be effective for achieving the priorities.

How strongly do you agree that...	No. that agree
...the evidence base and detailed findings in this section are accurate?	3 out of 4
...the priorities for this group reflect the findings for that group?	3 out of 4
...the priorities for this group reflect your understanding of their needs?	3 out of 4
...the actions for this group will be effective for achieving the priorities?	1 out of 4

Respondents made the following comments relating to this vulnerable group:

- The chapter does not give any data for drug and alcohol use among over 65s. In my experience this is a growing issue and can bring additional issues in terms of tenancy sustainment and available housing options
- This section wavers from residential care provision and sheltered accommodation provision but without making clear what is required and when it can be delivered
- More education on this issue in schools is needed
- There have been incidents within Cheshire East that drug dealers are given brand new homes, without the relevant checks and within months the houses have been raided, the housing association then moves the tenant on to another area. It is a vicious circle and our young people are being caught up in county lines. It does appear that these tenants have originally come out of the area and bring their drug dealing with them.

Young People in Need

There were 3 responses for this vulnerable group.

Similar to previous groups, whilst a majority agreed the evidence base, findings and priorities were good, smaller proportions felt the actions for this vulnerable group will be effective for achieving the priorities.

How strongly do you agree that...	No. that agree
...the evidence base and detailed findings in this section are accurate?	2 out of 3
...the priorities for this group reflect the findings for that group?	2 out of 3
...the priorities for this group reflect your understanding of their needs?	2 out of 3
...the actions for this group will be effective for achieving the priorities?	1 out of 3

Respondents made no comments relating to this vulnerable group.

Cared for Children & Care Leavers

There were 3 responses for this vulnerable group.

Similar to previous groups, whilst a majority agreed the evidence base, findings and priorities were good, smaller proportions felt the actions for this vulnerable group will be effective for achieving the priorities.

How strongly do you agree that...	No. that agree
...the evidence base and detailed findings in this section are accurate?	2 out of 3
...the priorities for this group reflect the findings for that group?	2 out of 3
...the priorities for this group reflect your understanding of their needs?	2 out of 3
...the actions for this group will be effective for achieving the priorities?	1 out of 3

Respondents made no comments relating to this vulnerable group.

Homelessness

There were 3 responses for this vulnerable group.

Similar to previous groups, whilst a majority agreed the evidence base, findings and priorities were good, smaller proportions felt the actions for this vulnerable group will be effective for achieving the priorities.

How strongly do you agree that...	No. that agree
...the evidence base and detailed findings in this section are accurate?	3 out of 3
...the priorities for this group reflect the findings for that group?	3 out of 3
...the priorities for this group reflect your understanding of their needs?	3 out of 3
...the actions for this group will be effective for achieving the priorities?	1 out of 3

Respondents made no comments relating to this vulnerable group.

Respondent type

Most respondents classed themselves as a member of one of the vulnerable groups which the strategy covers. 7 respondents represented an organisation that works with vulnerable people.

A significant number of respondents selected “other” here, and included volunteers working in vulnerable people organisations, and a town councillor.

Which of the following best describes how you are you responding to this consultation:	Total
I class myself as a member of one of the vulnerable groups listed within the strategy	10
I represent an organisation that works with vulnerable people	7
I am related to, or care for, someone who lives in supported accommodation	1
Other	10