



**HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY
CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

2014-2017

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1. Introduction

1.1 Statutory Duty

The Homelessness Act 2002 granted new provisions and powers for local authorities' work on homelessness and prevention. It required local authorities to publish a review of homelessness in their area and a strategy for the future, outlining how the council and their partners would work to prevent homelessness and ensure accommodation and support for those who were homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The Act requires that a new and revised strategy be published at least every five years; this is Cheshire East's second Homelessness Strategy following Local Government Review in April 2009 and it will run from 2014 to 2017. This document should be read in conjunction with Cheshire East's Homelessness Review.

1.2 Homelessness Review

The latest review of homelessness took place between March 2013 and January 2014 and provided a detailed analysis of:-

- The extent of homelessness in the borough and the reasons for it
- The profile of accommodation available
- Services that are currently providing assistance to homeless households
- Gaps in service
- The resources that are available to tackle homelessness

Consultation took place with staff, service users and stakeholders to gain an insight into their experience and to gain an understanding of the issues they face on a daily basis.

The homelessness review and this strategy will be published on the Council's website.

1.3 Achievements form the last homelessness strategy.

The previous action plan was based upon five main themes and priorities identified in the strategy. These were:-

Prevention

- Funded the CAB to run Fit to Face The future workshops to encourage financial inclusion.
- Funded PlusDane's Furniture scheme which created jobs and gave a grant to YMCA to assist working residents.
- Continued to fund specialist Young Person's workers in Macclesfield and Crewe
- Implemented joint protocol between Housing and Social Services for dealing with homeless 16 and 17 year olds and delivered training to both teams
- Maintained contacts with police and Probation via multi-agency meetings to deal with serious and prolific offenders.
- Rolled out No Second Night Out to tackle rough sleeping

- Published severe weather emergency protocol outlining service for rough sleepers in cold weather
- Worked with RSL's to tackle anti social behaviour
- Launched Landlord accreditation to increase supply of good standard properties in private sector
- Encouraged Bond clients to sign up to Credit union to build up their own deposit and to save
- Put a protocol in place for how domestic violence cases are dealt with for social housing
- Attending MARAC
- Participated in and funded court desks in Macclesfield and Crewe to assist in cases with mortgage and rent arrears

Processes

- New IT now procured to assist in collection of data on housing needs and the profile of clients approaching for advice
- Single Point Of Access with common referral form was introduced from 1st April 2013
- Partnership working improved with many agencies
- Standardised some processes with other local authorities via the Cheshire Homelessness Group

Temporary accommodation

- Temporary accommodation review completed and used to inform review of short term services in the Borough
- Protocol in place on Homechoice for move-on from supported housing projects
- Assessment process for clients accessing Cheshire East temporary accommodation in place.

Tenancy support

- Appointed 2 private sector support officers – 2 years ended in March 13
- Roe street hostel support worker appointed
- Single point of access funded and due to start 1st April will improve referral system as only 1 form required
- Successful bid with YMCA for funding for support for under 35's in the private sector
- CAB workshops covered some aspects of skills needed to run a tenancy
- Provided a storage facility for residents of supported housing to store donated furniture

Permanent Accommodation

- Completed Borough's Housing strategy
- The Homechoice policy has been successful in increasing the numbers of households accessing social housing who are homeless/threatened with homelessness
- Affordable housing options promoted via Homechoice

- Private Sector Liaison Officers have promoted Bond Scheme, run Landlord Forums and produced newsletters
- Tenant's packs have been developed to advise clients looking for private sector accommodation
- Prevention Fund widely used to improve access to permanent accommodation.

The majority of actions in the plan were completed and many clients have been assisted via the prevention measures as a result of these actions.

This document begins with an examination of relevant strategies and a policy at a National and local level and then sets out the strategic priorities for Cheshire East

2. Strategic context

This section outlines the national and local strategic context within which the Cheshire East Homelessness Strategy will be placed.

2.1 National policy

In the past 3 years the Government has put in place a number of reforms to social, housing and welfare policy.

Laying the Foundations- a Housing Strategy for England (2011) – is the first national housing strategy. This strategy outlines the government's approach to homeless prevention, meeting the needs of vulnerable people, managing the consequences of those made homeless and addressing rough sleeping. The strategy also enables local authorities to give extra priority to working households, those making a community contribution and ex-service personnel when allocating council housing.

Vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out (2011)- this programme was developed following the 2008 Rough Sleeping strategy “ No one left out communities ending rough sleeping”. It aims to tackle the flow of new rough sleepers onto the street as soon as possible, divert them from the street to avoid them becoming entrenched rough sleepers who may develop problems such as poor mental/physical health and substance misuse.

Making every contact count – a joint approach to preventing homelessness– this strategy published by the ministerial working group on homelessness in august 2012 includes 10 challenges for local authorities to meet in order to be awarded the Gold Standard in homelessness prevention.

The Localism Act 2011-introduced a number of local government reforms across finance, planning, governance and housing. The Government believes that these changes will enable local authorities to meet housing need more effectively, with less public expenditure. In summary the council and registered providers have a number of choices:-

- 1) To offer fixed term tenancies
- 2) To enter into the affordable rent market
- 3) To limit who will qualify to join the housing register (waiting list)
- 4) To use the private sector to discharge the homeless duty

The ways Cheshire East has implemented changes brought about by Localism Act are discussed fully in the homelessness review.

The Welfare Reform Act (2012)-this act introduced a raft of changes to the welfare system aimed at stemming the increasing expenditure on benefits and encouraging people to work. A summary of the changes is :-

- The introduction of Universal Credit- payment of certain benefits including job seekers allowance, tax credit and housing benefit will be paid direct to the claimants bank account on a monthly basis
- The shared room rate for clients under 35 years old on housing benefit
- An increase in non-dependent deductions for housing benefit claimants
- Setting of Local allowance rates at the 30th percentile
- Limiting LHA to the rate for a 4 bedroom property

The impacts of these changes in Cheshire East so far have not been great, the introduction of Universal credit in the latter part of 2014 will present new challenges to those dealing with vulnerable clients.

A reduction in public spending- the Government has reduced expenditure on public services across the board. This has impacted on the funds available to prevent homelessness and has seen reductions in the Supporting people budget for Cheshire East from 9.6 million in 2010 to 7.4 million in 2013/14. This has obviously had an effect on what services can be provided, with clients with complex needs and challenging behaviour being refused access to services due to a lack of high level support funding.

Reducing health inequalities- the Government has introduced significant reforms in the health and social care sectors. These reforms will affect commissioning and service provision.

Promotion of a sustainable and resilient economy –a delivery framework is being developed by the Government in order to create “ the right conditions for a private sector led recovery”. These plans include :-

- Plans to get more people back into work with jobcentres collaborating with local work plan providers, colleges and other organisations.
- Removing the default retirement age (currently 65)- this may result in people on lower incomes struggling to maintain their accommodation and their quality of life will be affected.

Expectations that the private housing sector will contribute more to meeting housing need

Revisions to the planning system.

Making Every Adult Matter- this is a coalition of four national charities- Clinks, DrugScope, Homeless link and Mind- formed to influence policy and services for adults facing multiple needs and exclusions.

Some of the documents underpinning these policies and strategies are:-

- Localism Act 2011
- Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England 2012

- Laying the Foundations- the Government's housing strategy for England(2011)
- Welfare Reform Act 2012
- Sustainable communities, settled homes, changing lives- a strategy for tackling homelessness (2005) - this strategy still underpins much of the prevention work undertaken by local authorities. It aimed to reduce the numbers of people living in temporary accommodation by preventing homelessness, providing support to vulnerable clients and tackling the symptoms and wider causes of homelessness rather than addressing clients needs when they are already homeless.
- Local government and public involvement in health Act 2007- this act outlines the requirement for health authorities to have a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment in place to tackle health inequalities.
- The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 promotes the practice of partnership working to reduce crime and disorder and places a statutory duty on police and local authorities to develop and implement a strategy to tackle problems in their area.

2.2 Sub-regional context

A group incorporating Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Warrington and Halton is responsible for the delivery of sub-regional homelessness actions. This group was launched in 2010 recognising that after local government review there was still a need to address larger, cross- boundary issues. The government awarded £352,000 to assist in tackling single homelessness and developing the private sector on a countywide basis. Cheshire East has used this funding to support the MySpace private sector bid, beyond the initial 1 year contract length, and to help in the setting up costs for the Single Point of Access for supporting people short term services for homeless clients. Current actions include funding bids under the new single homeless fund, Platform for life and Fair Chance funds. The group is also looking at the future of the No Second Night out project which is due to end in March 2015.

2.3 Local context

Cheshire East has several strategies that have an impact on and link into homelessness issues.

Cheshire East Housing Strategy- Moving Forward 2011-2016 is the long-term vision for housing in the borough. It sets out five key priorities for the delivery of a balanced housing market to meet the varied needs of the Borough's residents:-

- Delivering market and affordable housing
- Making the best use of existing stock
- Meeting the needs of our most vulnerable residents
- Meeting the needs of an ageing population
- Investing in our neighbourhoods

The housing team are adopting a proactive approach to improving access to good quality housing in the private sector by promoting landlord accreditation and providing information to landlords via newsletters and landlords forums. The Deposit Guarantee Scheme and Prevention Fund enable access to the private sector for those clients who cannot access appropriate social housing accommodation. The Homechoice system makes the best use of

housing stock by giving a higher level of priority to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The Homechoice system also ensures that allocations can be made quickly and effectively by reducing the length of time that properties are empty. Older people are also able to access information about their housing options via the Homechoice website. The newly launched Enhanced Housing Options module gives people information on different types of housing and support and presents them with an action plan of their options and next steps. The Single Point of Access is helping to meet the needs of vulnerable residents by providing a single route into support services and information about what is available in the area. The Young Person's Housing support workers also provide a valuable advice service to young people, helping them to either remain at home via mediation or to secure a place in supported housing.

Vulnerable and Older Person's Housing Strategy – Cheshire East is developing a strategy that will improve accommodation options for vulnerable people, including those that are homeless. Once completed it will enable greater well-being, independence and quality of life, its aims are :-

- To map the current supply and demand for accommodation by different vulnerable groups
- Use this information as a basis for developing a better model of accommodation and support provision
- Improve the well-being of vulnerable people by providing appropriate housing and ensuring that all relevant agencies are involved in the provision of services.
- Provide an evidence base to inform planning decisions and future commissioning decisions.

Tenancy strategy – this strategy was formulated after the implementation of the Localism Act in 2011. It gives guidance on how Cheshire East would like to see the following addressed by registered providers:-

- What kind of tenancies they offer
- The circumstances in which they will grant a tenancy of a particular type
- Where a tenancy is for a set term, the length of term that will be offered
- The circumstances in which a further tenancy will be granted when the existing one has ended.

Private Rented Sector in Cheshire East Report 2014 –is a comprehensive study of the location, types and affordability of accommodation in the private sector in the Borough.

Other strategies that link into the homelessness strategy are:-

- *Cheshire East's Sustainable Community strategy 2010-2023*
- *Ageing Well plan 2012-2017*
- *Local Plan* – this is the plan for Cheshire East which is the basis for determining planning applications, this is currently being prepared and will guide development up to 2030
- *Cheshire East Domestic Abuse partnership strategy 2014-2016* – this strategy has been formulated to set out the priorities established by the

CEDAP's commissioning and development group as part of its work to redesign and re-commission all services involved in a co-ordinated community response to domestic abuse. The strategy has 6 key priorities under the headings prevention and early intervention, protection, provision, partnership, participation and performance.

- *Joint Strategic Housing Needs Assessment* - this has been developed by the Health and Wellbeing Board and NHS Eastern Cheshire and NHS South clinical commissioning groups. It reflects the adult social care, Public health and NHS Outcome frameworks, as well as the proposed NHS commissioning Outcomes and the Children and Young People's Health Outcomes strategy. The JSNA aims to improve the strategic planning and commissioning of both the local authority and the NHS to improve health and wellbeing and to help tackle inequalities to deliver the best service for the population of Cheshire East.

There are services within the council and other organisations that have a direct strategic link with homelessness, these are:-

- Strategic Partnerships across Cheshire East enable joint commissioning and improved integration of local services. This includes a Leaders board and transformation groups which align delivery and are working towards joint commissioning and integrated delivery. Community Hubs are being developed across Cheshire east building networks between people. Communities, local groups, services, activities and local assets.
- CEDAP- Cheshire East Domestic Abuse Partnership coordinates the shared work of all key statutory and voluntary sector bodies to keep people safe from domestic abuse and make the best use of resources.
- Supporting People- aims to enable adults with housing related support needs to live independently, through different types of support such as sheltered housing, supported housing, funds floating support services that can help with budgeting, developing social and life skills; understanding and managing a tenancy and accessing other services.
- Safer Cheshire East Partnership- this includes Cheshire Constabulary, Cheshire police authority, Cheshire East Council, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, Central and Eastern Cheshire PCT, Cheshire Youth Offending Team, Registered providers (Housing Associations), East Cheshire NHS trust and CEDAP. The current priorities are:-

- § Crime prevention
- § Anti-social behaviour
- § Reducing offending
- § Domestic abuse and vulnerable people
- § Road safety

2.4 Homelessness in Cheshire East

As previously stated the full facts and figures of the extent of homelessness in Cheshire East and service provision are fully outlined in the Homelessness review, the current position can be summarised as follows.

The number of applications has risen in 2011/12 and 2012/13 compared to 2010/11 but not significantly and does not appear to be reaching the levels of 2009/10 when there were 203 presentations. The numbers of couples with children has reduced but there has been an increase in the number of lone males being accepted.

There has been a shift in the main reasons for homelessness, historically parental eviction was always one of the main reasons for homelessness, this has reduced significantly with just 9 cases in 2012/13. Most other reasons for homelessness have remained fairly static over the past 3 years, with mortgage arrears and rent arrears remaining at low levels as causes of loss of accommodation. These findings support the success of the actions taken to reduce homelessness in the last strategy.

The number of successful prevention cases has increased year on year for the past 3 years, of the 727 cases prevented in 2012/13 the majority were assisted to move into social housing via the housing register, showing that the allocations policy is giving reasonable preference to those households threatened with homelessness. The numbers being assisted to remain in their own homes also increased by 27% from 2011/12 to 2012/13, this was an action from the previous strategy and shows how early intervention can help prevent households losing their homes.

The main message from stakeholders and providers in support services is that the level of complexity of need has increased; there are more people with drug and/or alcohol and/or other issues that require multiple skills to address. Between May 2013 and February 2014 1798 referrals were made to Supporting People short term services in the Borough via the Single Point of Access (SPA).

The launch of the SPA coincided with the introduction of a simplified range of Supporting People services, the service is still evolving and there is scope to improve the amount and quality of referrals received and also to review how best the software can be used to make services accessible to clients.

Providers also highlighted a lack of move-on accommodation which means that people who are ready to live independently are unable to move out and this blocks access to accommodation for others who require the specialist support.

When taking into consideration the contribution that other, non-housing specific services, make to preventing and responding to homelessness there is a good level of provision in the Borough. There are some gaps in service and lack of multi-agency working for some categories of clients has been identified.

There is some evidence of a mismatch between the types of services needed and those actually provided, with the biggest gap existing for people (young people and adults) who

have complex needs to meet, including chaotic behaviour and undiagnosed or unaddressed mental health problems and those with substance abuse issues. There is also some inconsistency in the services provided for young people, with no drop-in facility in the south of the borough. Rough sleepers have access to more services in the south of the borough, church groups and the Salvation Army work together to try to meet the needs of this group, no such service exists in the north. Collaboration between agencies in a time of budget constraints will be needed to address the gaps, costs of services for this type of client will be high so resources need to be pooled to achieve positive outcomes for individuals.

Existing service provision could be more effective if a number of barriers were addressed. These include better methods of communicating information to potential or existing service users a variety of media and reaching those who do not visit the main service points in the borough. There is a lack of broader knowledge about services and therefore appropriate referrals for customers and also a lack of access to affordable settled accommodation preventing timely move-on from supported and other forms of accommodation, thereby limiting access to support for new service users.

Since the last homelessness strategy the council has restructured the housing options service to put more resources and effort into homelessness prevention and this has had an impact on statutory homelessness. The Homechoice service launched the Enhanced Housing options module in May 2014, this self-help tool assists customers to make informed choices about their housing options, obviously this will not be an appropriate route for all customers and many will still seek advice via other avenues.

Access to privately rented accommodation has been limited to single people under 35 due to welfare reform changes, this has impacted negatively on move-on from supported housing projects and other temporary accommodation and put more pressure on social housing stock. Cheshire East needs to work with other agencies and private landlords to develop initiatives to address this gap in provision. The current piece of work being undertaken to build up a picture of what the private sector in Cheshire East looks like may provide an insight to any possible opportunities to meet this aim.

The consultation events demonstrated that there is a real commitment from agencies and providers in Cheshire East to achieve positive outcomes for people who are homeless or who are at risk of homelessness. New solutions are being developed through the use of existing resources or by accessing alternative funding, for example Arch, floating support provider in the south of the borough, offer a drop-in facility to clients who can discuss their support and accommodation needs and receive appropriate referrals to services.

Cheshire East also provided funding to YMCA Crewe to provide support to rough sleepers attending the Salvation Army drop-in facility, work was done to signpost to other organisations and to try to find a solution to their accommodation needs. Better working relationships between mental health services, social workers, probation and housing will be needed to deliver successful outcomes for clients and a multi-agency approach will reduce duplication of work and result in more appropriate support and accommodation for clients with complex needs.

Homelessness is not something that the Council's Housing Options Team nor voluntary and community sector organisations should be left to tackle alone. There are several issues that need wider partners to come together to address. Two of these are how clients with complex needs, who are repeat service users, should be dealt with and how the problem of a lack of affordable accommodation for young single people should be tackled. The priorities and actions from the review are outlined in the following sections.

3. Priorities for Cheshire East

The review of homelessness in Cheshire East and consultation with stakeholders in the statutory and voluntary sectors, as well as with service users has informed a number of priorities for Cheshire East. These are detailed in the following sections, under the following headings:

- § Providing effective early intervention
- § Complex needs and Crisis management
- § Support
- § Accommodation and affordability
- § Communication

Under each heading the key findings from the review, and where appropriate from consultation, are outlined. Action points follow.

Cheshire East Council is committed to developing this strategy into an action plan that will be taken forward over the next 3 years.

Action 1: The Council will work with partner organisations to develop an action plan encompassing each of the points in this strategy, for delivery in the period 2014-2017

Action 2: Cheshire East Homelessness Strategy Steering Group will be instrumental in assisting the development of this action plan, and in designing a structure for implementing, monitoring and evaluating progress against the targets set out in the action plan.

Action 3: Service users will be involved, via consultation, in development of any new initiatives which are brought forward from delivery of the action plan

4. Providing effective early intervention

Prevention of homelessness is central to this strategy. Homeless acceptances have risen slightly over the past 2 years in Cheshire East, as in the rest of England, so it is important to maintain if not improve on the number of successful prevention cases achieved. The earlier the intervention the more likely it is that a household can be kept in their own homes and this should be the main aim wherever possible.

This section details Cheshire East Council's strategic actions in a number of prevention areas.

4.1 Effects of welfare reform

Findings from the review

The homelessness review set out in detail how the various welfare reform issues have, and will in the future, affect households in Cheshire East. The entitlement to the single room rent only for single people ages 25 to 34 will continue to impact on homelessness as this group are unable to access affordable accommodation in the private sector.

The introduction of Universal Credit will increase financial pressure on households and may result in increased evictions due to failure to pay housing costs. The reduction in housing benefit for working age social tenants has affected around 2400 households in the Borough, who will either have to make up the difference in their rent or move. The benefits cap, which has limited the amount of benefits income available to both single and family households, has had a minimal effect on households in the borough but in conjunction with Universal Credit this will reduce income and means that choices will have to be made on where to spend household income.

Much work was undertaken by Cheshire East in partnership with registered providers and other agencies to try to minimise the impacts of changes as they were introduced and the borough's housing allocations policy was changed to try to manage the effects of the under-occupation charge for social tenants.

The consultation events revealed that the main concerns were around ensuring that vulnerable clients are able to access advice and assistance to deal with the changes to the benefits system, receive budgeting advice and improve financial capability.

Strategic Actions

Action 4: Cheshire East Council to work with DWP to provide debt advice to vulnerable clients and to identify those who need to have rent paid directly to their landlord.

Action 5: Encourage Registered Providers to put mechanisms in place to ready tenants for the introduction of Universal Credit, offer budgeting workshops and bespoke advice sessions.

Action 6: Improve partner's knowledge, particularly social care, of how welfare reform issues will affect vulnerable clients and where they can obtain help to resolve housing related benefit problems.

Action 7: The Housing team will ensure that staff are aware of changes and are able to access resources to assist clients who are threatened with homelessness.

4.2 Single Homeless Clients

Findings from the review

Despite fairly low homeless acceptances amongst single people, 51 in 2012/13, this group still made up 47% of the 108 households who were owed a duty and the number of single males accepted has increased from previous years. Welfare reform changes have affected the ability of single people under 35 to access affordable accommodation in the private sector and this has had a knock-on effect in supported housing projects, with residents unable to move-on and therefore preventing vulnerable clients from accessing services.

The number of single homeless clients under 25 accessing help from the Young Person's Housing Support workers was 180 in the period from October 2012 to September 2013, the work done by the 2 members of staff means that many cases who would have presented as homeless are assisted to source alternative accommodation or remain at home where it is reasonable to do so.

Single homeless service users who attended the consultation event expressed the need for more diverse methods of communicating information to them and also highlighted the issues in finding affordable accommodation.

Strategic Actions

Action 8: Explore the possibility of a drop-in facility for young people in the south of the borough, to provide holistic advice including housing, benefits and debts as part of the development of community hubs.

Action 9: Cheshire East will work with stakeholders to ensure that single homeless clients are aware of how they can access information regarding housing and benefits issues.

Action 10: The Council will look to continue to fund the work of the Young Person's Housing Support Workers in Cheshire East to ensure that parental evictions do not increase and youth homelessness is reduced.

Much of the information and feedback from the review and consultation process centred around communication and accommodation for this group and there are further actions in these sections later in this document relating to single homeless clients.

4.3 Homeless from institutions/leaving care

Findings from the review

The results of the review revealed that the numbers of care leavers presenting as homeless are very low with just 6 cases of care leavers aged 18-20 or former care leavers over 21 being accepted in the last 3 years. As at 30th September 2013 there were 59 16+ year olds in care that could all potentially leave and there were 66 13 to 15 year olds who could possibly leave care in the next 3 years.

The Housing and 16+ teams work closely together on conducting joint assessments on 16/17 year olds who present as homeless, exact numbers are not available but very few opt to take up the offer of “cared for” status opting to accept an offer of supported accommodation or to return home.

The consultation process, which involved a specific workshop on care leaver issues, generated several priorities including the need to deliver more timely advice to care leavers early in the planning process and to put better measures in place to prepare care leavers for independent living.

The numbers of clients accepted with the reason left prison was just 3 in 2012/13 and only 5 in total for the last 3 years. This figure does not show the true extent of homelessness amongst offenders leaving prison. Probation were unable to provide any information about current caseloads but the number of cases being referred for accommodation via the SPA (Single Point of Access) by prison advice workers and probation is increasing, 15 referrals in the 3 months to June 2014. The lack of specialist accommodation for high level offenders was highlighted in the review consultation process.

Those leaving hospital with no accommodation to go to are also not highly represented in those accepted as homeless, over the past 3 years just 5 cases have been accepted. However the issue of unplanned discharges from hospital, particularly from the mental health unit at Macclesfield hospital, has become a real problem. This results in vulnerable clients being placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation with little support. Housing is exploring options to tackle this problem with partner agencies. No specific feedback was received around discharges from hospital during the consultation process.

Strategic Actions

Action 11: Cheshire East Housing team will work with colleagues on the 16+ team to encourage and support the delivery of earlier housing advice to those young people leaving care.

Action 12: The Housing team will maintain links with the 16+ team and encourage joint training to ensure that both teams are kept updated with processes and changes in legislation.

Action 13: Cheshire East will build on existing programmes to address the issue of unplanned discharges from hospital, particularly from mental health units, to ensure that vulnerable clients are not placed in inappropriate accommodation.

Action 14: Cheshire East will look to develop better links with probation services to ensure that they are fully informed on homelessness issues and best able to advise clients.

Action 15: Work will be undertaken with resettlement officers in prisons and young offender's institutions to ensure that they are able to access services e.g. single point of access, at an early stage, to avoid offenders being released from prison with no accommodation.

4.4 Preventing rough sleeping

Findings from the review

Rough sleeping is not considered to be a major problem in Cheshire East, with just 4 rough sleepers at the last estimate in Autumn 2013. This figure represents a snapshot on 1 particular night of the year and at different times of the year local knowledge suggests that there may be more individuals sleeping rough in the borough.

Over the past 2 years the No Second Night Out initiative has assisted clients new to rough sleeping to access accommodation. 53 individuals were helped between June 2012 and July 2013, the majority went on to secure a bed in supported housing. This programme is due to end in March 2015 and it will be imperative to ensure that an alternative solution is put in place to continue this work in order to prevent entrenched rough sleeping from increasing. The review highlighted that while there are services for rough sleepers in the south of the borough, the Salvation Army, Crewe YMCA and the LATH group provide assistance to rough sleepers in the Crewe area, there are no such services in the north of the borough.

The consultation process recognised the need to improve services across the borough, stakeholders suggested that there is a need to build on the No Second Night Out programme to include those with complex needs and to provide enhanced support services to this client group.

The issue of identifying numbers of those sleeping rough and a better picture of entrenched rough sleepers were also raised as issues and several suggestions were made as to how a better picture of the extent of rough sleeping in the borough could be achieved. The promotion of the national reporting system for rough sleeping "Streetlink" and the collection of data via the councils Homechoice and SPA systems were two of the actions that could contribute to this aim.

Strategic Actions

Action 16: In consultation with partners, Cheshire East will review the remit of the No Second Night Out project with a view to extending it to more complex clients.

Action 17: Cheshire East will continue to work with partners, charitable organisations and local churches to develop services to assist rough sleepers.

Action 18: The Council will try to form a more accurate picture of the extent and location of rough sleeping in the borough.

4.5 Homeless from the social rented sector

Findings from the review

The review revealed that homeless acceptances with rent arrears from social rented accommodation as the reason for homelessness, have been nil for the last 3 years. However evictions by social landlords are on the increase and it will be necessary to monitor this to assess the impact of welfare reform over the next couple of years. While the impact of the housing benefit under occupation restrictions on social housing tenants has not been significant in the Borough, the introduction of Universal credit is likely to cause widespread problems across the social rented sector.

Tenants will have all their benefits, including housing benefit, paid to them in one monthly payment and they will be responsible for making rental payments to their landlords themselves. Universal Credit is due to start rolling out across Cheshire East from July 2014 and the council has been working closely with Registered Providers and partner agencies to try to address some of the issues around budgeting, lack of bank accounts and the need for IT support for clients who need to access Universal Credit.

Strategic Actions

Action 19: The council will work with all the main providers of social rented accommodation to ensure that measures are in place to assist clients, who are in financial difficulties, at an early stage, in order to prevent evictions.

Action 20: The Council will monitor the number of evictions from the social rented sector to identify any trends and take appropriate action if needed to address this issue.

Action 21: Cheshire East will continue to provide funding via the Homeless Prevention Fund to assist clients who have arrears in the social sector.

4.6 Homeless from the private rented sector

Findings from the review

Homelessness due to the ending of a tenancy in the private sector is still the main reason for homelessness amongst those owed a duty; there were 26 cases in 2012/13, 31 in 2011/12 and 21 in 2010/11. Many more who did not reach the homeless decision stage were assisted

via prevention officers to either secure social housing or an alternative private let. The two Private Sector Liaison Officers and the Homeless and Prevention officers work closely together to provide advice to households who are served notices by their landlords and in the past early intervention has been successful in assisting households to resolve issues around rent arrears and housing benefit problems so that they can remain in their homes. In 2012/13 19% of the 127 cases who were assisted to remain in their homes were due to negotiation or other assistance in the private rented sector.

The review highlighted that the Council's rent bond scheme has been under-utilised since the introduction of the Emergency assistance fund in April 2013. It is essential to improve the uptake of this initiative as it helps build good links with landlords and makes it easier to work with them to prevent homelessness.

The main issues discussed at the stakeholder and service user events were around accessing private lets and affordability issues, the required actions on these aspects are outlined later in this document.

Strategic Actions

Action 22: Cheshire East will develop a private sector landlord offer, to incorporate a tiered system of services available to private landlords, encouraging them to become accredited and to work with the private sector liaison officers to prevent homelessness.

Action 23: The issuing of section 21 notices by private landlords will continue to be monitored by the Housing team; this process will identify bad practice by landlords, increase homeless prevention and help to identify common themes occurring on reasons for eviction.

Action 24: The rent bond scheme will be re-launched with the aim of increasing the numbers of landlords participating and also encouraging financial inclusion by tenants with the link into the Credit union.

4.7 Homeless due to relationship breakdown

Findings from the review

Relationship breakdown between couples, violent and non-violent, accounted for 28% of the cases accepted as homeless in 2012/13, 14% were non-violent and 14% were violent. These numbers have remained fairly static over the last 3 years. The numbers being accepted due to parental eviction have reduced by 25% from 15 in 2011/12 to 9 in 2012/13, this reduction is due in part to the work of the young person's housing support workers who provide housing advice to the 16-24 age group. Figures suggest that there may have been many more presentations to the homeless team if these interventions had not taken place. There were 180 referrals to the two workers between October 2012 and September 2013, 83

of these cases moved into supported housing and 46 either remained at home or moved in with other family members.

The review indicates that domestic abuse services and housing are working well together via the MARAC process to address housing and homelessness issues for victims of domestic abuse and no specific actions were identified in the findings of either the review or the consultation process.

The main actions to move forward in the strategy are around continuing partnership working and ensuring that housing staff are well-informed around changes in legislation and local practices so that they are best able to advise clients.

Action 25: Housing Options will link into the action identified in the Vulnerable person's Housing strategy to develop information-sharing protocols in order to create better shared databases of clients movements and status.

Action 26: Cheshire East will continue to work closely with the established cross-agency groups on domestic abuse issues.

Action 27: Cheshire East will continue to work jointly with partners to maintain and improve the reduction in homelessness due to parental eviction.

Action 28: Housing staff will receive on-going training on domestic abuse awareness and housing rights on breakdown of relationship in order to provide advice to clients presenting with these issues.

5. Complex Needs and Crisis Management

Findings from the review

The main message from stakeholders and providers in support services is that the level of complexity of need has increased; there are more people with drug and/or alcohol and/or other issues that need multiple skills to address. Between May 2013 and February 2014 1798 referrals were made to Supporting People short term services via the Single Point of Access (SPA). The services co-ordinated under the SPA are mainly low to medium need supported housing projects and floating support services which are unable to provide the levels of support required for individuals with complex needs.

Some accommodation providers are flexible and accommodate some of the more chaotic or high needs clients but as numbers of this type of client increase they will be unable to accept referrals due to the need to balance the overall needs of residents in their accommodation. The Supporting People needs analysis indicates that there is likely to be an undersupply of supported accommodation in the future and that many services are currently operating waiting lists.

The Vulnerable and Older Person's Housing strategy highlights the need for:-

- More direct access temporary accommodation to avoid the use of Bed and Breakfast
- More interim and temporary accommodation is required for complex or high needs cases- particularly those with drug/alcohol issues, with high level support to prepare for independent living
- A greater supply of supported accommodation for complex homeless clients so that prolonged stays in temporary accommodation are avoided and this will allow lower needs clients to access temporary accommodation and move more quickly into permanent housing.

Some of the actions around accommodation for this group outlined in the Vulnerable and Older Person's Housing strategy are mirrored in the Homelessness strategy action plan. The consultation responses, both in writing and at the stakeholder's event, highlight the need for a multi-agency approach to assessing clients with complex needs. There are a cluster of individuals in the borough who have exhausted all their accommodation options but still continue to present regularly to different services, there needs to be a clear policy on how these clients will be dealt with and how information is shared amongst professionals.

Homeless acceptances for people with mental health needs are the second highest reason for priority need; in 2012/13 18% of the 108 households accepted had this as the primary reason for their vulnerability. As previously highlighted discharges from mental health units into homelessness are increasing, as are the numbers of clients presenting with mental health issues that have not had a formal diagnosis. Often these individuals are accommodated in low level support temporary accommodation and arranging a formal mental health assessment is a protracted and difficult process. The lack of good links between Housing and mental health services are compounding these problems and the pathways for how clients will be assessed and what services will be available to them are not clear at present. Providers of specialist floating support for people with mental health

problems are unable to meet current demand and this may result in vulnerable individuals losing their homes as they are not receiving the support they need to sustain their tenancies. The actions below reflect the need for better multi-agency working and processes, the support and accommodation issues identified are incorporated into the relevant actions under these headings in the action plan for this strategy.

Strategic Actions

Action 29: Utilise the existing cross-agency working group to explore and develop options to address the lack of specialist accommodation for clients with substance abuse issues.

Action 30: Cheshire East will look to introduce a multi-agency approach to assessing clients with complex needs.

Action 31: Housing will develop a protocol for how difficult clients will be dealt with, who make repeat presentations to the housing team and via the single point of access.

Action 32: The Housing Options team will work with partner agencies to ensure that they are trained in how the homelessness process works and how to access advice in emergency situations.

Action 33: Improve liaison with mental health services to inform housing staff on the pathways for clients with mental health issues. Also improve staff awareness on how they should approach clients with these health problems.

6. Support

Findings from the review

Supporting People funded services are the main source of tenancy support in the borough. The launch of the Single Point of Access (SPA) in May 2013 coincided with a review of Supporting People services that resulted in a reduced number of providers of floating support and the introduction of a set of services aimed at five main client groups:-

- Drug/alcohol issues
- Resettlement
- Mental health
- Generic/disability
- Offenders

The SPA is still evolving and there is a need to increase the number of organisations using the service and to improve the quality of the referrals being made. Several providers operate a drop-in facility where clients can discuss their support and accommodation needs and receive appropriate referrals to services.

During the consultation process service users and stakeholders agreed that the SPA needs to be more widely advertised and support made easier to access. Feedback from workshops held at the consultation events indicates that the current floating support provision is unable to deal with the more complex cases and this should be addressed. Service users also thought that support duration could be more flexible, lasting longer when need be and that they would like to be able to tap back into services after it has ended if need be. Both these points need joint action from Supporting People and housing to ensure need is being met.

As previously discussed benefits/welfare reform is an area where it is felt extra support provision is needed. The introduction of Universal Credit, stricter sanctions on Job seekers who fail to comply with conditions of receiving benefit and a lack of financial capability are all areas that could potentially increase homelessness due to loss of housing benefit or the failure to make rent payments. The council and partner agencies need to ensure that this issue is tackled and a range of measures to mitigate the impact of welfare reforms was suggested at the consultation events which are included in the action plan to this strategy. The introduction of the Enhanced Housing Options module to the Homechoice website provides a self-help toolkit for customers.

The site provides holistic advice on housing options, benefits, money advice, sign-posting to other services and owner/tenant legal rights. Customers answer a series of questions and are provided with a detailed action plan at the end of the process. This service will help users to find out about the support services and how to access them.

Strategic Actions

Action 34: Develop the Single Point of Access for supported accommodation and floating support services with the aim of increasing awareness amongst stakeholders and improving referral rate.

Action 35: Cheshire East will work with partners in the statutory and voluntary sectors to ensure support is available to those clients affected by welfare reform issues.

Action 36: Housing will work with the Supporting people service to ensure that provision of floating support is meeting need, monitoring applications and referrals via the SPA.

Action 37: Promote the use of the Enhanced Housing options module on the Homechoice system in order to facilitate access to support for residents of the borough across a range of issues.

7. Accommodation and Affordability

Findings from the review

As outlined earlier the Vulnerable and Older Person's housing strategy highlights some of the issues around gaps in provision for homeless clients with complex needs and the need for more direct access temporary accommodation in the borough. The strategy also identified gaps in accommodation provision for people with sensory and physical disabilities and this applies to those who become homeless and require temporary accommodation. Little provision exists to provide suitable interim accommodation for this group.

The Homechoice policy, which sets out Cheshire East's approach to allocating social rented properties, was reviewed in 2011 and changes implemented in 2012 to meet the requirements of the Localism Act 2011. The policy gives preference to those people who are homeless and the banding system is used to ensure that households who are threatened with homelessness are also afforded priority; this resulted in 62 households being housed into social rented accommodation via this prevention route in 2012/13.

The review of homelessness highlights the lack of affordable accommodation for single people, particularly those aged under 35. Welfare reform changes have impacted negatively on move-on from supported housing projects and temporary accommodation and put more pressure on social housing stock. The strategic housing market assessment, updated in September 2013, shows that there were 4381 households on the housing register needing a 1 bedroom property but only 453 lets were made into bedsit/1 bedroom properties in the previous year. Households requiring this type of accommodation are therefore likely to have a long wait for a social rented property as there is a significant under-supply of this type of accommodation.

Accessing the private sector for the 18 to 34 age group is also difficult with the capping of local housing allowance to the shared room rate. There is very little shared accommodation in the borough and the consultation process made several suggestions as to how the private sector could be made more accessible to this age group. Cheshire East needs to use the findings of the recently completed review of accommodation in the private sector to explore the possibility of opening up the private sector for homeless clients. The actions outlined previously regarding the development of a private sector landlord offer and the re-launch of the rent bond scheme may also generate more opportunities to secure private rented accommodation.

Feedback from stakeholders and service users highlights the need for more information to be made available on renting privately. Cheshire East is piloting the use of the Homechoice system to advertise some of vacant properties owned by accredited landlords and this may provide another source of good quality accommodation for homeless clients. There was some concern around the length of tenancies issued by private landlord's, it was felt that longer tenancies would give people stability meaning that they would be more likely to look after the property and to settle better.

Ensuring that accommodation, whether it be social rented or in the private sector, is affordable is essential to ensure sustainment of accommodation and prevent homelessness. Many registered providers now conduct affordability checks on potential tenants prior to

making an offer of accommodation and this practice is also used by the housing team when utilising the rent guarantee scheme or prevention fund to access a privately rented property for a client. In the past 12 months many households have by-passed housing, and the advice available to them, and have accessed funding via the council's Emergency Assistance fund. It is felt that more rigorous affordability checks are needed on these applicants in order to ensure that the property is affordable in the long term and that they do not have debts.

It is essential to continue to promote the work of the council's Money Advice officer and local debt advice agencies in order to ensure that clients get advice at an early stage to prevent loss of their accommodation.

Consultation feedback included the need to promote financial inclusion and to provide more pre-tenancy training and/or trial tenancies for those moving out of supported housing or those who have never held a tenancy-care leavers in particular were thought to need extra input before moving into independent living.

Strategic Actions

Action 38: Cheshire East will use the Review of private sector accommodation to develop a plan to increase the housing stock available to single homeless people.

Action 39: Housing will work with partners to deliver the actions identified in the vulnerable person's housing strategy with regard to people with physical and sensory disabilities and their housing needs.

Action 40: The Housing team will work with Supporting People and accommodation providers with a view to ensuring that stock is being used to best effect and changing use where deemed appropriate.

Action 41: Continue to promote the development of more flexible social rented accommodation through planning processes and the reuse of empty homes, prioritising accommodation suitable for single homeless clients.

Action 42: Housing will complete affordability checks, where appropriate, on those clients who engage with the prevention team and private sector liaison officers to ensure that any tenancy offered is sustainable.

Action 43: Explore the possibility of pooling the housing emergency accommodation budget with Children's services to best meet the needs of care leavers and other homeless clients.

Action 44: Housing will build on existing schemes to enable move on into the private sector from supported/temporary accommodation.

Action 45: The Housing Allocations policy and Homechoice system will be continually monitored and reviewed to ensure it best meets the needs of the Borough's residents and is adapted to meet new legislation

Action 46: Housing will continue to use all available funding streams to address affordability issues for those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Action 47: Cheshire East will promote the work of the money advice officer and monitor referrals to the service to assess the impact of any increase in mortgage interest rates on owner occupiers.

8. Communication

Findings of the review

A common theme throughout the review and consultation process was the need for the council to promote the services available to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and also to ensure that stakeholders are aware of the processes for accessing advice, accommodation and support for their clients.

The homelessness legislation is very complicated but it is important that those agencies who deal with vulnerable, potentially homeless people are aware of the implications and possible outcomes of a homeless application and are able to manage the expectations of their clients. It would also be useful for stakeholders to have a good, basic overview of the services covered by housing options team and what other agencies may be able to do to assist.

Some of the suggestions from stakeholders on this theme were around the development of a professionals housing hub to share and disseminate information and the need for better information sharing protocols across the agencies dealing with vulnerable people. Service users attending the consultation event raised the issue that many young people in supported accommodation lack the motivation to do anything for them and rely on their support worker to get information and advice on housing issues for them.

The use of social media or advertising in places where young people are likely to congregate, to get over information regarding homelessness/housing, would be a better option than a leaflet that they would be unlikely to read. Service users also thought that presentations in schools would be of benefit, to educate young people on homeless issues and to give them realistic expectations of what will happen if they leave home. It was felt that the way we deliver information about homelessness to service users and residents of Cheshire East needs to be improved and new methods of communication used. There is a need to extend partnership working into the wider community to deliver the key messages on homelessness to a broad range of organisations.

There is a need to develop more robust methods of gathering customer feedback and to consult with service users and stakeholders more frequently on homelessness issues. The review consultation process demonstrated that there is a real commitment from agencies and providers in Cheshire East to achieve positive outcomes for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and there needs to be a way of ensuring that this continues to be the case by keeping them up to date with developments in the service and consulting with them on improvements that could be introduced.

Strategic Actions

Action 48: Housing will look to development different methods of communicating information and giving advice to residents of the Borough.

Action 49: Engaging with stakeholders and the wider business community needs to be improved to ensure that they are aware of available services.

Action 50: Housing will look to develop information sharing protocols both with departments inside the council and other agencies.

Action 51: Housing will improve the content of the Cheshire East website so that people can easily access information. The feasibility of the development of a housing hub for professionals will form part of this process.

Action 52: Develop better consultation and feedback processes with service users and stakeholders to ensure that they are involved in how housing services should look.

9. Implementation & Monitoring of the Strategy

The action plan established from the strategy will help evidence the need for investments and/or commissioning of new services within the Borough.

In order to ensure that the action plan objectives are met and achieved, structured and comprehensive monitoring of the plan must be completed.

The Homelessness Strategy Steering Group, consisting of statutory and other voluntary agencies, will monitor and review the progress in accordance with the action plan on a quarterly basis. A review of the Homelessness Strategy will be undertaken annually to establish feedback and progress of the action plan.

9.1 Future Consultation

The strategy is a working document and it is therefore essential that it is reviewed and the projects/initiatives contained in the action plan are monitored to ensure that they are carried out.

As one of the priority actions emerging from the consultation is joint working, it is important that regular liaison is carried out with key partners and service users.

The Homelessness Strategy Steering Group is an essential part of the monitoring process and contains a number of key organisations. A full list of the organisations represented on the steering group can be found in Appendix A.

9.2 Future Strategy Changes

As the strategy is a living document it is inevitable that some alterations may occur and that some actions may not be deliverable. The removal or additions of relevant actions, in addition to any changes in funding arrangements should be discussed with key partners and agreed in principle with the majority of the Homelessness Strategy Steering Group.

All key stakeholders will be notified of the changes agreed and will be given 28 days to respond.

9.3 Comments & Feedback Relating to this Strategy

Feedback and updated information from stakeholders, as a result of the distribution of the Homelessness Review, has been taken into account in the formulation of this strategy. If you would like to make any comments about this document or to request any further information or related documents please contact:

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AST	Assured Shorthold Tenancy
BME	Black & Minority Ethnic
CAB	Citizen Advice Bureau
CBL	Choice Based Lettings
CEC	Cheshire East Council
CDAP	Cheshire Domestic Abuse Partnership
CLG	Communities and Local Government
DGS	Deposit Guarantee Scheme
EHO	Enhanced Housing Options
GP	General Practitioner
HA	Housing Association
HB	Housing Benefit
HMO	House in Multiple Occupation
HOT	Housing Options Team
HSSA	Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
JSNA	Joint Strategic Housing Needs Assessment
LA	Local authority
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LGR	Local Government Re-Organisation
LHA	Local Housing Allowance
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
MAPPA	Multi Agency Public Protection Panel
MARAC	Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference
NSNO	No Second Night Out
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PPO	Prolific and other priority offender
PSL	Private Sector Leasing
P1E	Statistical return on statutorily homeless households
RSL	Registered social landlord
SMART	Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time bound
SMHA	Strategic Market Housing Assessment
SP	Supporting People
SPA	Single Point Of Access
YOT	Youth Offending Team

APPENDIX A

List of organisations represented on Homelessness Strategy Steering Group

English Churches Housing Group
Cheshire East Council Care Leavers Team
Youth Offending Team
Adullam Housing
Cheshire Police
Macclesfield Cradle Concern
Citizen's Advice Bureau
Arch
Jobcentreplus
Richmond Fellowship
East Cheshire Drugs Service
Crewe YMCA
Cheshire East Council Benefits Section
P3 Charity
Barnardo's
Child & Adolescent Mental Health 16-19 Team
Probation Service
Just Drop In Macclesfield
Plus Dane Housing
Crewe Women's Aid
Making Space

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2014-2017

This action plan is designed to be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and have a clear Timescale). It has been based on the 5 main themes and priorities identified in the strategy and the resulting actions.

PROVIDING EFFECTIVE EARLY INTERVENTION						
Key Issue	Action	Resources	Lead Officer/Partnership	Measure Of Success	Target Date	Actual Outcome
1.1 Welfare reform	Work with DWP to provide debt advice to vulnerable clients and those who need direct payments to their landlord.	Staff Time-possible funding from DWP	Homelessness Team Leader/Money Advice Officer	Numbers of direct payments secured and cases assisted.	On-going	
	Work with registered providers to assist tenants to be prepared for the introduction of Universal Credit by providing advice and budgeting workshops.	Staff time	Housing Options team leaders	The number of evictions from social tenancies remains low.	On-going	
	Provide information to partner agencies on how welfare reform issues may affect their clients and where they can access advice to resolve housing related benefit issues.	Staff time	Policy & Monitoring Officer	As above.		
	Ensure that Housing options staff are fully trained on the impacts of welfare reform and are able to assist clients with benefit issues.	Staff Time £3k-grant budget	Housing Options team leaders	Prevention cases on resolution of benefit issues increase.		
1.2 Single Homeless Clients	Explore the possibility of a drop-in facility in the south of the borough to provide holistic advice on housing, benefits and debts for young people.	Staff Time Set up costs depends on if joint funded.	Policy & Monitoring Officer	Service provision matches that available in North of Borough.		

PROVIDING EFFECTIVE EARLY INTERVENTION						
Key Issue	Action	Resources	Lead Officer/Partnership	Measure Of Success	Target Date	Actual Outcome
	Consider the continuation of the role of Young Person's Housing Support Workers across the borough.	Between £120K-£130K grant budget over 2 years	Housing Options Manager/Policy & Monitoring Officer	Low numbers of parental evictions are maintained and number of homeless preventions increased.		
	Work with stakeholders via various meetings and groups attended to ensure they are aware of what services are available to single homeless clients	Staff time	Housing Options team leaders	The numbers of single homeless acceptances, particularly males, is reduced.		
1.3 Homeless from institutions/leaving care	Improve the delivery of advice on housing options to young people who are due to leave care.	Staff time	Policy & Monitoring Officer/16+ team	More care leavers are registered for social housing or a private sector tenancy.		
	Housing to continue to work closely with the 16+ team with regards to care leavers and 16 and 17 year olds.	Staff time	Housing Options manager/16+ team manager	Staff are trained on changes on legislation on both sides and the 16/17 year olds protocol is regularly reviewed.		
	Work with resettlement officers in local prisons and young offender's institutions to ensure that offenders are aware of where to access services e.g. single point of access so that they do not leave custody with no accommodation to go to.	Staff Time	Policy & Monitoring Officer	Numbers of homeless acceptances from ex-offenders remains at a low level and applications via the SPA are increased.		
	Cheshire East will continue to work with health services to reduce the numbers of unplanned discharges from local hospitals, particularly mental health units.	Staff time	Homelessness team leader	The numbers of cases presenting as homeless from hospital and placed in temporary accommodation is reduced.		

PROVIDING EFFECTIVE EARLY INTERVENTION						
Key Issue	Action	Resources	Lead Officer/Partnership	Measure Of Success	Target Date	Actual Outcome
	Improve links with probation services to ensure they are well informed about homelessness services and are able to feed into future strategies and initiatives.	Staff time	Homelessness team leader/Policy & Monitoring officer/Probation	Better information is available with regards to the numbers of offenders who are homeless and homeless acceptances for those leaving custody remain low.		
1.4 Preventing Rough sleeping	Cheshire East will look to build on the No Second Night Out project to ensure provision is available to clients new to rough sleeping and to consider extending the remit of any new scheme to include clients with complex needs.	Staff time £40K grant budget	Housing Options Manager	Levels of rough sleeping remain low.		
	Continue to work with partners, voluntary organisations and local churches to provide services for rough sleepers. Including making funds available to assist in periods of cold weather.	Staff time £27k for SWEP over 3 years grant budget	Housing options manager	Rough sleepers' access appropriate services and are assisted to move off the streets.		
	A more accurate picture of the extent of rough sleeping in the borough is established via Streetlink system, Single Point of access and local intelligence	Staff time	Policy & Monitoring Officer	Mapping of the areas and numbers of rough sleepers' is completed		
1.5 Homeless from social rented sector	Cheshire East will work with the main providers of social housing to ensure processes are in place to provide timely advice for tenants in arrears.	Staff Time	Policy & Monitoring Officer/Money Advice officer	Pre- court protocols in place with all main providers of social housing.		
	Evictions from social housing will be monitored to identify any	Staff time	Homelessness Team leader	A recording system in place to monitor evictions and the		

PROVIDING EFFECTIVE EARLY INTERVENTION						
Key Issue	Action	Resources	Lead Officer/Partnership	Measure Of Success	Target Date	Actual Outcome
	trends and take appropriate action.			reasons for them.		
	Cheshire East will continue to use the Homelessness Prevention fund to assist clients who have arrears in the social sector	Staff Time 10% of total prevention fund £12500	Policy & Monitoring Officer	Evictions from social rented sector are prevented and homeless acceptances remain low.		
1.6 Homelessness from the private sector	Cheshire East will develop a private sector landlord offer to incorporate a tiered system of incentives for landlords.	Staff time 20% of total prevention fund £25000	Housing Options Manager/Policy & Monitoring Officer	More landlords become accredited and the standards of private rented accommodation are improved.		
	The reasons for the issuing of section 21 notices will be monitored to check validity and reasons for issue.	Staff time	Senior Homechoice Adviser	Ending of assured shorthold tenancies are reduced and prevention outcomes are improved.		
	The Council rent bond scheme will be reviewed and re-launched	Staff Time 15% of total prevention fund £18900	Policy & Monitoring Officer	Numbers of landlords participating in the scheme is increased and more clients are signed up to Credit union		
1.7 Homeless due to relationship breakdown	Link into action in the Vulnerable Person's Housing Strategy to develop information sharing protocols	Staff time	Adult services	The creation of a shared database of clients movements and status		
	Housing will continue to work closely with the established cross-agency groups dealing with domestic abuse- MARAC and MARAC steering group and provide funding for target hardening.	Staff Time £10k over next 2 years grant budget	Homechoice Team Leader/Policy & Monitoring officer	Homeless approaches from clients experiencing domestic abuse remain low.		

PROVIDING EFFECTIVE EARLY INTERVENTION

Key Issue	Action	Resources	Lead Officer/Partnership	Measure Of Success	Target Date	Actual Outcome
	Cheshire East will continue to work with other agencies to prevent parental evictions.	Staff time(including young person's housing support workers)	Policy & Monitoring Officer	Homeless acceptances for young people remain low.		
	Housing staff will receive on-going training on domestic abuse awareness and relationship breakdown housing rights	£3k- grant budget	Housing Options Manager	Homeless acceptances with relationship breakdown as main reason are reduced.		

COMPLEX NEEDS AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Key Issue	Action	Resources	Lead Officer/Partnership	Measure Of Success	Target Date	Actual Outcome
2.1 Clients with substance misuse issues	Cheshire East will use the existing cross-agency working group to explore the options for the provision of specialist accommodation for clients with substance abuse issues.	Staff Time Cost of support via Supporting people budget	Housing Options Manager//Adult services	Accommodation provided that enables clients to address addictions and move into independent living		
2.2 Clients with complex needs	Explore the possibility of introducing a multi-agency approach to assessing clients with complex needs.	Staff time	Complex Case worker/homelessness team leader	A system is put into place to manage complex cases reducing the numbers of clients who become street		

COMPLEX NEEDS AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT						
Key Issue	Action	Resources	Lead Officer/Partnership	Measure Of Success	Target Date	Actual Outcome
				homeless and providing a one stop approach for customers.		
	Develop a protocol to deal with repeat presentations to services from individuals who have exhausted all options	Staff Time	Homelessness Team leader/Policy & Monitoring Officer	Protocol in place, which is shared with fellow professionals resulting in a reduction in the resources used to deal with these cases.		
	Provide on-going advice and training to partner agencies to ensure that they are aware of processes within the Housing team and are able to access advice for clients.	Staff time	Housing options manager/Team leaders	Fewer emergency approaches from clients are made and housing staff attend team meetings of other organisations to provide and receive information.		
2.3 Clients with mental health issues	Improve liaison with mental health services and establish the support pathways for clients with mental health issues.	Staff time	Homelessness Team Leader	Fewer acceptances from clients with mental health issues and clients placed in temporary accommodation with these issues, are assessed promptly to establish their support needs.		

COMPLEX NEEDS AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Key Issue	Action	Resources	Lead Officer/Partnership	Measure Of Success	Target Date	Actual Outcome
	Housing Options Staff improve awareness about mental health illnesses in order to be better prepared to deal with clients presenting with these issues.	Staff time £1k-grant budget	Housing Options team leader	Staff are trained on how to approach clients with mental health issues and are able to access relevant services for them.		

SUPPORT

Key Issue	Action	Resources	Lead Officer/Partnership	Measure of Success	Target Date	Actual Outcome
3.1 Single Point of Access	Improve use of the SPA by increasing awareness of the service amongst stakeholders	Staff time	Policy & Monitoring Officer	More on-line applications for supported accommodation and floating support received.		
	Providers will be encouraged to promote their services to other agencies and potential service users.	Staff time	Policy & Monitoring Officer	Increased referrals to service providers resulting in fewer homeless presentations.		
	Housing will work with Supporting People to ensure that the short term service contracts are meeting need by monitoring applications and referrals through the SPA	Staff time	Policy & Monitoring Officer	Service users are able to access appropriate support promptly and waiting lists are kept to a minimum.		

3.2 Welfare reform	Cheshire East will work with other agencies, statutory and voluntary to ensure that support is available to those clients affected by welfare reform issues, particularly Universal Credit.	Staff time	Policy & Monitoring Officer	Measures are put in place to provide advice and homeless acceptances due to rent arrears do not increase.		
3.3 Enhanced Housing Options	Housing will promote the use of the Enhanced Housing Options module on the Homechoice system to facilitate access to support for residents of the borough across a range of issues.	Staff time	Homechoice Team Leader	The numbers of people accessing the system increases and clients are able to make choices based on the advice provided.		

ACCOMMODATION AND AFFORDABILITY						
Key Issue	Action	Resources	Lead Officer/Partnership	Measure Of Success	Target Date	Actual Outcome
4.1 Accommodation	Use the review of private sector stock in Cheshire East to increase accommodation available to single people.	Staff Time Grant funding to landlords to improve properties	Housing Options Manager	An increase in shared and 1 bed accommodation in the private sector is achieved.		
	Work with partners to deliver the actions in the Vulnerable & Older Person's strategy with regards to homeless	Staff time Grant funding to landlords to make adaptations.	Strategic Housing Manager	People with disabilities are able to access suitable temporary and permanent		

ACCOMMODATION AND AFFORDABILITY						
Key Issue	Action	Resources	Lead Officer/Partnership	Measure Of Success	Target Date	Actual Outcome
	client with physical and sensory disabilities.			accommodation.		
	Housing and Supporting people will work with providers of supported accommodation to ensure stock is being used to best effect and changing use when deemed appropriate.	Staff time	Policy & Monitoring Officer	Use of bed and breakfast and temporary accommodation is reduced as waiting lists for projects are minimised.		
	Continue to promote the development of more flexible social rented accommodation through planning processes prioritising accommodation for single people.	Staff time	Strategic Housing Manager	An increase in 1 bedroom accommodation in the social rented sector.		
	Work to bring empty homes back into use to provide accommodation for homeless clients	Staff time	Housing options Manager/ Private Sector Housing Manager	A process in place that links empty homes and private sector liaison officers work to make more properties available to potentially homeless households.		

ACCOMMODATION AND AFFORDABILITY						
Key Issue	Action	Resources	Lead Officer/Partnership	Measure Of Success	Target Date	Actual Outcome
	Housing will work with Children's services to explore the possibility of pooling emergency accommodation budgets to best meet the needs of care leavers and other homeless clients.	Staff time Possible budget savings	Housing Options Manager/ Children's Services manager	Use of bed and breakfast is reduced.		
	Build on existing schemes to enable move on into the private sector for clients in supported/temporary accommodation. Consider the extension of the MySpace project and a shared accommodation tenants register.	Staff Time £20k-grant budget	Policy & Monitoring Officer	Waiting lists in supported accommodation are reduced and more clients are assisted into independent living.		
	The housing allocations policy and Homechoice system will be regularly reviewed to ensure it best meets the needs of the Borough's residents and meets any legislative changes	Staff Time	Housing Options manager	Those threatened with homelessness or already homeless are assisted into social housing.		
4.2 Affordability issues	Housing will complete affordability checks, where appropriate, on	Staff time	Housing Options Team leaders	Tenancies are sustained and homeless		

ACCOMMODATION AND AFFORDABILITY						
Key Issue	Action	Resources	Lead Officer/Partnership	Measure Of Success	Target Date	Actual Outcome
	those customers who engage with the prevention team or private sector liaison officers.			acceptances due to rent arrears remain low.		
	Housing will continue to use all available funding streams to address affordability issues for those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.	Staff time 55% of prevention fund £69,000 EA budget (up to end March 2015) Discretionary Housing payment budget Budgeting Loans	Policy & Monitoring Officer	Homeless prevention figures show good use of available resources.		

COMMUNICATION						
Key Issue	Action	Resources	Lead Officer/Partnership	Measure Of Success	Target Date	Actual Outcome
5.1 Promoting services	Housing will look to develop different methods of communicating information and giving	Staff time £5k-grant budget	Housing Options Manager	New methods in place and residents are better informed about services.		

COMMUNICATION						
Key Issue	Action	Resources	Lead Officer/Partnership	Measure Of Success	Target Date	Actual Outcome
	advice to residents of the Borough.					
	Engagement with stakeholders and the wider community will be improved to improve their knowledge of homelessness issues.	Staff time	Housing options Team leaders	Voluntary agencies and residents of the borough are aware of services and are able to pass information on to potential service users. An increase in those using services such as Homechoice and the SPA should be the outcome.		
5.2 Consultation	Better consultation processes with service users and stakeholders will be developed.	Staff Time	Policy & Monitoring Officer	A wider cross-section of agencies and stakeholders are able to feed into policies and strategies and can help to shape how services should look.		
5.3 Website	Housing will improve the content of the Cheshire East website to make it easier for people to access information. The feasibility of the	Staff time	Housing options Manager	Improved links on website achieved. Partner agencies are able to access and share information with housing colleagues.		

COMMUNICATION						
Key Issue	Action	Resources	Lead Officer/Partnership	Measure Of Success	Target Date	Actual Outcome
	development of a professionals housing hub will also be explored					
5.4 Protocols	Housing will look to develop information sharing protocols both with internal departments and other agencies.	Staff time	Housing Options Manager	Services for clients are more streamlined and homeless decisions and housing applications are dealt with more quickly as information is readily accessible.		