

Wycombe District Council

Homelessness, Rough Sleeping, Private Sector and Affordable Housing Strategy 2020 – 2022

	Contents	Page
1	Foreword from the Cabinet Member for Housing	3
2	Executive Summary	4
3	Background	5
4	Review of Homelessness Strategy 2014 - 2019, including Findings/ Achievements and challenges	6
5	The National Picture	8
6	The Local Picture for the Wycombe District	10
7	Recommendations from the Review- for the new Strategy	17
8	The Strategy 2020 – 2022	18
	Strategy 2020 - 2022 Part 1 - Strategic Objectives to minimise homelessness and rough sleeping through prevention and relief	19
	Strategy 2020 - 2022 Part 2 - To ensure the provision of affordable housing for those in housing need	21
	Strategy 2020 - 2022 Part 3 - To enhance the quality of housing in the District, including standards in the private sector and use of available grants to improve the health and well-being of residents	22
9	Future Monitoring and Review	25
10	Glossary of Housing Terms	25
11	Appendix: Action Plan 2020 - 2022	29

1. Foreword from Cllr Julia Langley - Cabinet Member for Housing, Wycombe District Council

This new Strategy is aimed at building on the successes of the Council's 2014 - 2019 Homelessness Strategy and the Action Plan for wider housing issues, as well as addressing the challenges which have arisen during that time.

This Strategy links with the Sustainable Community Strategy 2013 - 2031 for the Wycombe District and the Council's Corporate Plan to 2020.

The challenges of finding suitable affordable accommodation in an area of high housing demand have been compounded by limitations on the Local Housing Allowance, welfare reform changes (including Universal Credit) and the capping of housing benefit - which have increased the pressure on households in managing their finances.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 requires the Council to provide support and assistance to people who make an approach for housing advice.

The main focus of this Strategy is the prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping, as well as securing appropriate support where this is needed. The provision of long term accommodation that is safe, secure and affordable is also a priority.

Another priority for the Council is to enhance the quality of housing in the District, including housing in the private sector, to improve health and well-being of the residents.

This can only be achieved by continuing the Council's strong relationships with a range of partners, each contributing their valuable knowledge, skills and other resources to this important work.

The forthcoming change to a Unitary Council for Buckinghamshire, to be known as Buckinghamshire Council from April 2020, has resulted in this Strategy being for a shorter period than would otherwise be expected. The two year period of the Strategy is aimed at covering the period until the new Buckinghamshire Council has become established and has prepared its own Strategy.

I wish to thank everyone who has taken part in the consultation process, including Council officers and external partners, whose dedicated work and commitment are essential to enable us to collectively meet the on-going challenges and to try to assist in improving people's housing circumstances.

*Councillor Julia Langley
Cabinet Member for Housing
Wycombe District Council*

2. Executive Summary

This Strategy includes information on the national position on issues affecting homelessness and also the local context. The Strategy sets out:

- The review of the current homelessness position in the Wycombe District;
- The main challenges;
- The recommendations;
- Objectives and Actions for 2020 - 2022.

It is considered that affordable housing and private sector housing have links with homelessness and the Strategy therefore extends to these areas.

The Strategy is supported by an Action Plan Appendix for homelessness, rough sleeping, affordable housing and private sector housing. This sets out the Council's objectives; aims; who we will work with and the targets for delivery.

The Action Plan will be regularly monitored and reviewed via meetings of the Wycombe District Housing Forum Core Group and the Homelessness Subgroup (subject to any changes via the new Buckinghamshire Council).

This Strategy contributes to the Sustainable Community Strategy 2013 - 2031 for the Wycombe District and the Council's Corporate Plan to 2020.

The Sustainable Community Strategy for Wycombe District aims to address a number of key challenges and includes a vision that "Wycombe District will be economically strong and the place to live, work and visit."

This includes balancing the need to provide more homes (including affordable homes) - sustainably balanced with jobs and essential infrastructure; and reducing homelessness.

3. Background

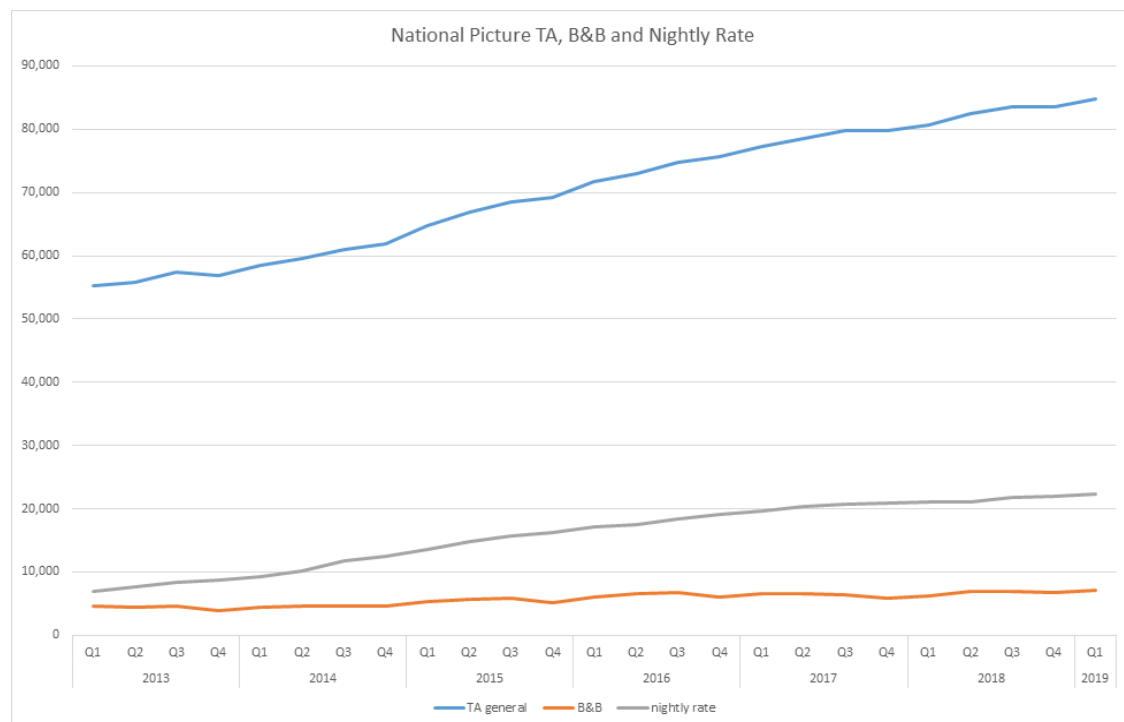
The Homelessness Act 2002 places a requirement upon Local Authorities to publish a Homelessness Review and Strategy every five years, setting out the issues of homelessness in their area and their plans to address the needs of customers.

In common with much of the South East, the high demand for housing in the Wycombe District impacts upon rent levels and property prices. The affordability pressures mean there is a high demand for the limited amount of affordable rented housing that comes available.

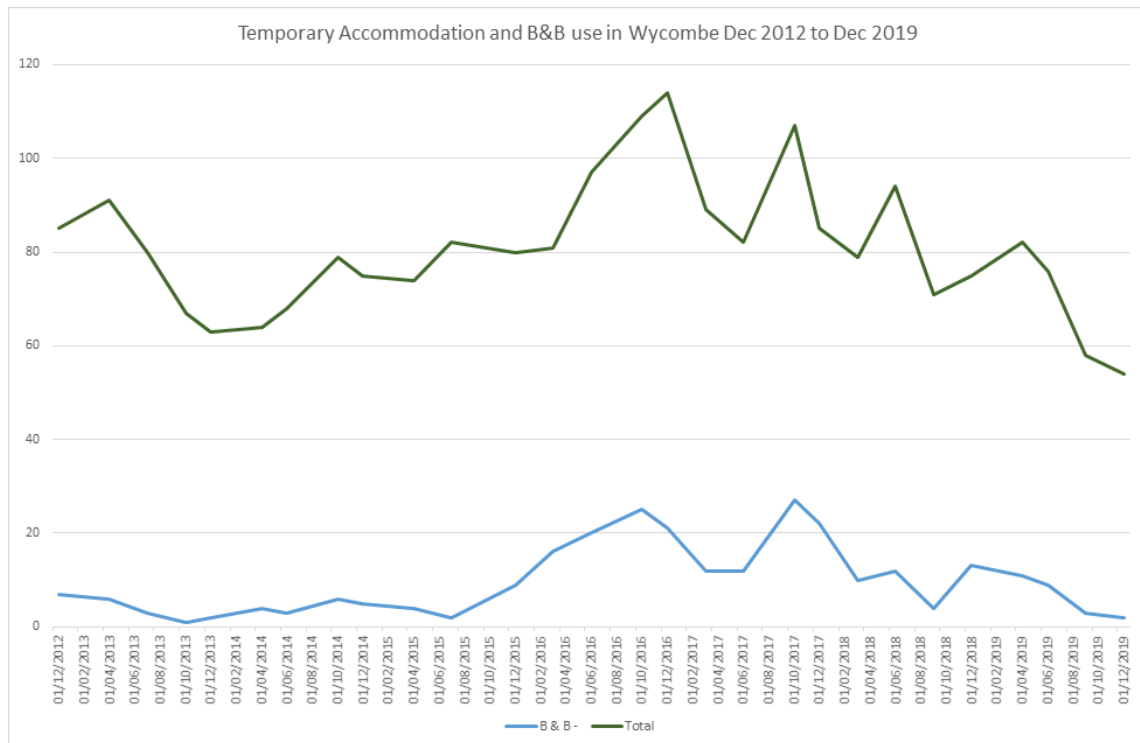
Wycombe District Council's most recent Homelessness Strategy covered the period 2014 - 2019. This followed on from earlier Strategies. In 2013, when the 2014 - 2019 Strategy was prepared, the key issues were to address the increasing numbers of homeless applications and acceptances, as well as the increasing number of households in temporary accommodation - which (both nationally and locally) had been rising since 2011.

In England, between 2013 and 2019 there has been a significant increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation.

Due to the success of prevention work, this increase has not been reflected in Wycombe – as can be seen from the following two charts. The first chart illustrates the total number of households in Temporary Accommodation (TA) nationally. The second chart shows numbers in TA per 1000 population nationally, compared to Wycombe.



Source - Government website gov.uk



Source - WDC Housing Service Records

4. Review of the Homelessness Strategy 2014 - 2019

The initial process in preparing for the new Strategy was to commission an independent review of homelessness and rough sleeping in the District, including the Council's 2014 - 19 Homelessness Strategy.

Following a tender process for specialist consultants, Shelter was selected to undertake this review. Shelter's work involved a review of available information and consultation with stakeholders, customers and staff. Shelter's review report was produced in April 2019.

Shelter considered the aims of the 2014 - 19 Strategy and their report identifies the achievements and the challenges, and makes recommendations for improvements which are to be incorporated into the new Strategy. Their findings, within these three elements, are summarised as follows.

4.1 Findings/ Achievements:

* The Housing Options Service has been developed, with a new staff structure. Additional staff were employed in prevention and landlord liaison in the build up to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Subsequently a single person's officer has been added and there are also staff with specialist money advice and debt advice skills who have either been employed into the team, or who have trained for professional qualifications with the Institute of Money Advice.

* The numbers in B&B accommodation remain low and no families are in B&B for longer than 6 weeks (not the picture nationally) and no 16/17 year olds have been placed in B&B.

* New temporary accommodation is also to be developed.

* The Council have made good and increasing use of the private sector both in the relief of homelessness and, on a lesser scale, in the discharge of duty. Applicants are assisted into the private sector through the use of rent deposit guarantees.

* There is a strong focus on rough sleeping using funding from MHCLG and working in partnership with the local voluntary sector. Although rough sleeping rose during the years 2014 – 2017 it did so more slowly than for the wider South East region, albeit with a sharp increase in 2018. In partnership with other District Councils, there is an effective outreach service and the provision of cold weather provision was greatly expanded in the last year.

* The county-wide Bucks Home Choice (BHC) Allocation Policy, was updated with effect from May 2014. It has since been reviewed again, to take account the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. The new BHC policy is being implemented with effect from October 2018.

* A Wycombe Welfare Reform Group was set up to work on understanding the impact of welfare reforms. Welfare reforms have now been implemented and there is a good understanding. The service works in partnership with the DWP and employs specialist money and debt advisors to assist people affected by the reforms.

* There is a joint working protocol for households found intentionally homeless containing children and the Councils consider it to be working well. A further protocol exists for care leavers.

* The Strategy contained a target to investigate the scope to create a local lettings agency. However, the conclusion was reached by the Council that this was not feasible.

* The targets for the delivery of affordable or social homes have been exceeded.

4.2 The main homelessness challenges:

* Financial: The Local Housing Allowance rates being lower than most rents, the move to Universal Credit, the lack of control of Discretionary Housing Payment in the homelessness service and the need for more affordable housing.

* The issue of substance misuse, particularly heroin as a cause of homelessness, a barrier to housing and having a major impact on the rough sleepers.

* The lack of support when people move from temporary accommodation to other housing and the long delays and/ or inability to obtain assessments by specialist services.

* Rough sleepers - links to substance misuse, increase in numbers - some with no recourse to public funds.

5. The National Picture

Some key changes in legislation have taken place during the period of the most recent strategy (2014-19). These all need to be taken into account in the new Strategy and Action Plan and brief summaries of these changes are set out in this section.

5.1 Homelessness Prevention and Relief

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017 came into effect from 3rd April 2018. The HRA places new duties on Local Authorities to properly assess the cause of homelessness, circumstances, and needs of all household members, including children. It also places new duties on Local Authorities to develop and agree with applicants a personalised plan of the steps that will be taken to prevent or relieve homelessness.

This Act also made changes to the Council's statutory homelessness duties placing more emphasis on the prevention and relief of homelessness. These include that the Council now has a duty to provide advice and assistance within 56 days of a household being threatened with homelessness (previously this was 28 days). The Council also has legal duties to prevent and relieve homelessness for all eligible households, regardless of whether they are in priority need.

In February 2018 (last amended April 2019) the Government published a revised Homelessness Code of Guidance on how Local Authorities should exercise their homelessness functions in accordance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, namely: - the duties, powers and obligations on housing authorities and others towards people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

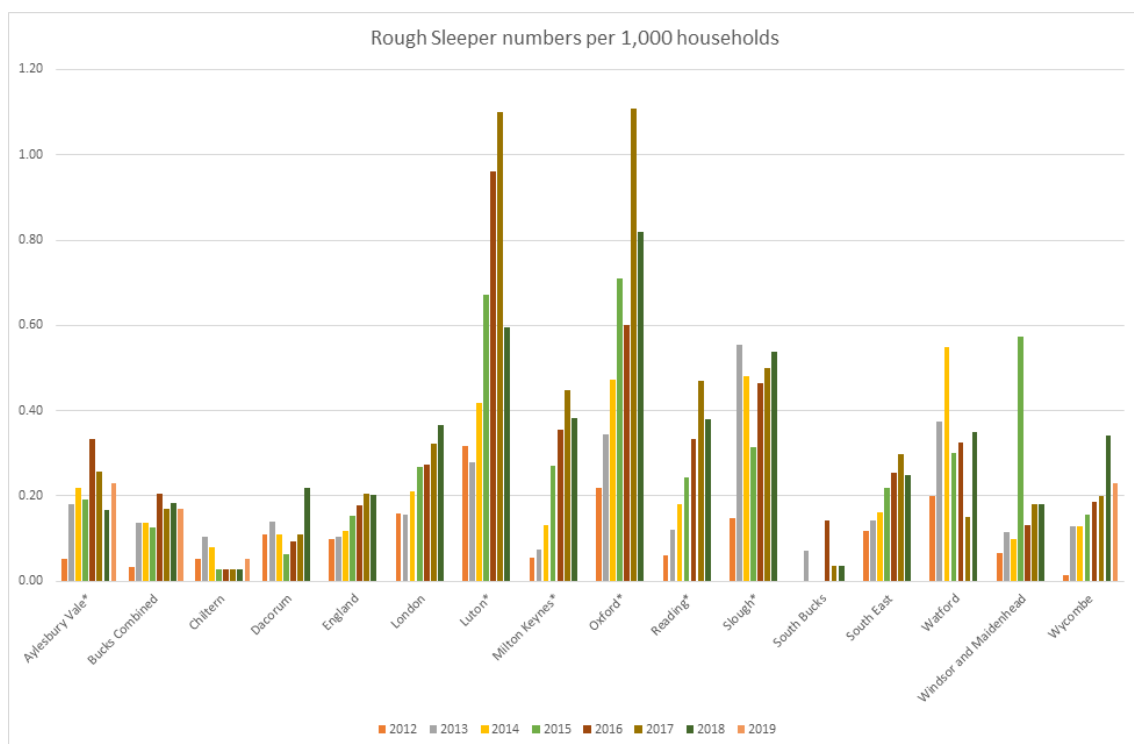
5.2 Rough Sleeping

In August 2018 the Government published its Rough Sleeping Strategy. This sets out the Government's plan to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and to end it by 2027. It includes a range of commitments, intended both to help those who

are sleeping on our streets or currently at risk of doing so, and to lay the foundations for a system focused on prevention, early intervention, and a rapid rehousing approach to recovery.

As per the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) instruction, since 2010 Local Authorities continue to carry out an Annual 'snapshot' figure to MHCLG to indicate the number of people sleeping rough in the area on a typical night.

The following chart illustrates the number of Rough sleeper numbers per 1000 population for England, the South-East, Wycombe and a number of nearby Local Authority areas.



Data Source - Government Statistics

5.3 Welfare Reform

Universal Credit was introduced via the Welfare Reform Act 2012. The intention of the new Act was to simplify the welfare system for people of working-age, replacing and combining six benefits / tax credits into one single monthly payment.

The new benefit began to be rolled out gradually to Jobcentres in 2013 but the initial timescale for transferred claimants to the new system has been extended and is on-going.

One of the concerns arising from the new system of one payment being made monthly is that there can be a waiting period of at least five weeks before the

first payment is made to the claimant. If required, claimants can apply for emergency loans, however this delay can lead to potential rent arrears.

6. The Local Picture for the Wycombe District

6.1 Local Strategies and Policies Related to the Strategy

There are a number of these, as listed below:

Bucks Home Choice Allocation Policy – Final Version 6th November 2019;

Buckinghamshire Tenancy Strategy 2013;

Wycombe District Local Plan 2013 - 2031, adopted August 2019;

Buckinghamshire's Health and Social Care Market Position Statement 2018-2022 Housing and Accommodation Solutions for People with Care and Support Needs - produced by Buckinghamshire County Council and the NHS Buckinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group

Wycombe District Council Corporate Plan to 2020;

Buckinghamshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016 – 2021;

Buckinghamshire Affordable Warmth Strategy 2017 – 2022.

Buckinghamshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2016 – 2022.

6.2 Homelessness Prevention and Relief

Working in partnership with agencies and other partners, the Council's housing service Officers provide relevant housing advice, including the prevention and relief of homelessness.

The main reasons for homelessness, or threat of homelessness, include the loss of rented accommodation (primarily in the private sector), relationship breakdown, domestic abuse, leaving institutions (such as prison, hospitals or care), gambling, and sexual trafficking.

The Council continues to comply with the relevant legislation and guidance, including the HRA 2017, through training for officers in the Housing Options service and adapting internal working practices.

Successful bidding for additional funding from Government in recent years has enabled the Council to increase the number of officers in the Housing Options service. This has led to a direct impact on the prevention and relief work, and

has also assisted in reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation.

This funding has enabled the Council to introduce/ continue a number of successful initiatives, including:

- * Negotiation with landlords, families and friends to prevent homelessness;
- * Helping clients to contact the relevant specialist support services;
- * Debt and money advice;
- * Incentives to encourage private sector landlords to provide accommodation to households threatened with homelessness, through the provision of a rent guarantee, deposits and loans to pay the deposit. This includes an in house deposit scheme and grant funding for the independent Wycombe Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme (WRDGS) which sources accommodation and carries out tenancy rescues and sustainment work;
- * Access to accommodation with supported housing schemes and hostels;
- * Closer working with the local office of the Jobcentre+ / Department for Work and pensions (DWP).

During the period of the 2014 - 2019 Strategy, the housing service has provided statistics on homelessness, comparing Wycombe's position to that of similar Councils and the national picture, which was obtained from information collected and published by MHCLG.

With the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 (on 3rd April 2018) the information reported in the old P1E was deemed by MHCLG to be no longer fit for purpose. A new reporting mechanism for homelessness came into use, known as H-CLIC, to replace the quarterly P1E statistics.

A number of additional reporting fields were added to H-CLIC data collection during the financial year 2018/2019 and MCHLG advised that the data for this period would be classed as experimental.

H-CLIC became fully operational in April 2019.

6.3 Households in Temporary Accommodation

Wycombe uses a number of sources for temporary accommodation, including the Council's hostel, which has 33 units, mainly bedsit type rooms, and additionally a small number of individual properties within the Council's ownership.

The Council also has access to up to 50 properties from Red Kite Community Housing that can be used for temporary accommodation. When there are

particularly high levels of demand, households are sometimes placed into bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation. The Council continues to aim to not place any families in B&B for longer than 6 weeks, in accordance with the relevant guidance.

6.4 Rough Sleeping

The Council, in partnership with other local agencies and organisations, continues to offer support to help people who are rough sleeping to try to find suitable accommodation and improve their lives.

The number of people rough sleeping in Wycombe is identified via the annual 'snapshot' figure, carried out in accordance with the national guidance. These figures for the most recent Homelessness Strategy period are shown in the following chart on Page 13. It will be seen that the numbers are fairly low, due mainly to the on-going partnership work with local agencies and organisations, including the Rough Sleeper Outreach Service for Buckinghamshire provided by Connection Support.

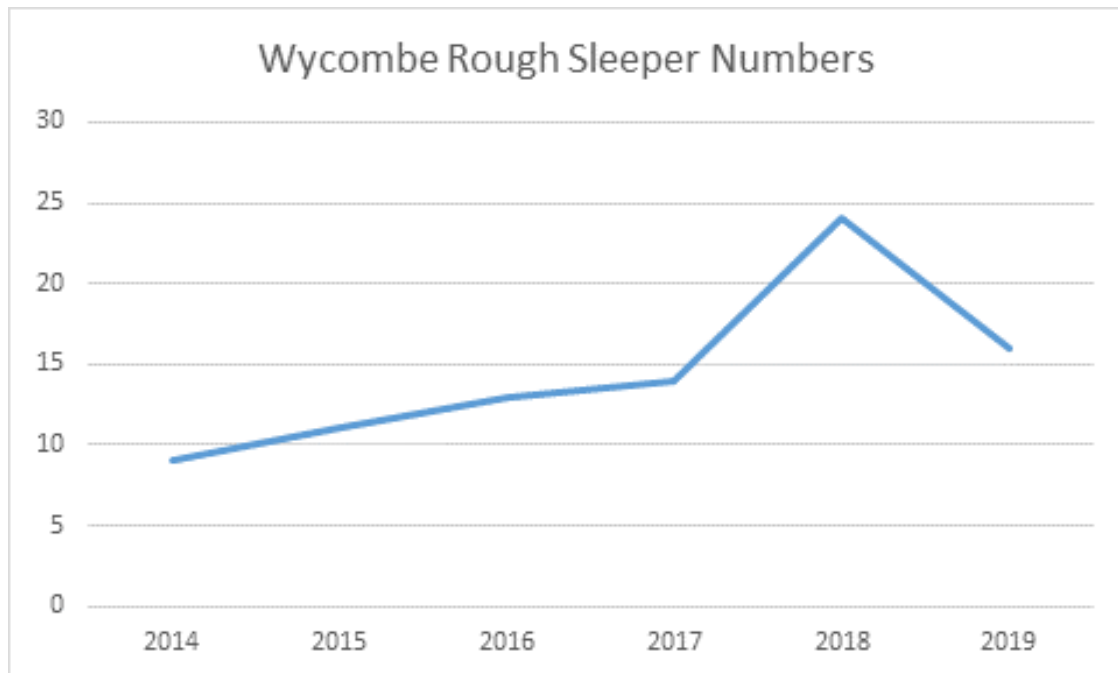
This local organisation was initially set up with Government funding for Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. When the Government funding ended, the four District Councils in Buckinghamshire agreed to continue the service via joint funding from their own resources.

Although the Outreach Service has continued to work well, the Annual 'snapshot' figure of rough sleepers gradually increased year on year, but in 2018 there was a sudden and significant increase in numbers.

The Council has also bid for and received funding from, a number of Government initiatives. This included the 2019/20 Homelessness Prevention Trailblazers Fund. A summary of the funding received recently under various programmes is listed in the following table.

Flexible homelessness support grant 2019/20	£376,000
Top up flexible homelessness support grant	£82,000
Top up prevention grant	£31,000
Sub-total	£489,000
Emergency Beds Rough Sleeper funding	£160,000
Rapid Rehousing Pathway funding - Tenancy Sustainment	£110,000
Cold Weather Funding 2018/19	£50,000
Overall total	£809,000

With the additional funding from Government, the Council and agency partners were collectively able to increase staff resources and provide an enhanced SWEP initiative for rough sleepers in Winter 2018/19. This contributed to the lower number of rough sleepers in the annual 'snapshot' figure for 2019.



A further enhanced SWEP initiative is in place for 2019/20.

6.5 Partnership Working

The Council works with a wide range of statutory and agency partners. During the period of the 2014 - 2019 Strategy, some protocol arrangements have been agreed with statutory partners. Additional work needs to be done and the existing Protocols are to be kept under review to ensure they meet relevant statutes/ guidelines.

To enable regular engagement with statutory and independent agency stakeholders, the Council facilitates a multi-agency forum for both statutory and voluntary agencies - known as the Wycombe District Housing Forum (WDHF) Homelessness Subgroup.

The Subgroup is independently chaired by a member of one of the partner agencies and meets quarterly. At each meeting, the group discusses current issues, best practice and scrutinises progress against the actions and targets set out in the Council's Homelessness Strategy, which also identifies areas for improvement.

Membership of the Homelessness Subgroup includes the following partner organisations:

- Wycombe Homeless Connection
- Wycombe Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme
- Connection Support
- Department of Work and Pensions/ Jobcentre+
- Buckinghamshire County Council
- One YMCA

Citizens Advice High Wycombe
Office of the local MP
Thames Valley Community Rehabilitation Company
Probation Service
P3 charity
Christians Against Poverty
Red Cross
Riverside
Community Mental Health Team
One Recovery Bucks
Wycombe Women's Aid
Thames Valley Police

The Council also encourages private sector landlords and letting agents to let their properties to clients in housing need. To enable regular engagement on topics of mutual interest, the Council facilitates meetings of a local Landlords Forum. Meetings of this Forum are held jointly with the National Landlords Association on a quarterly basis and are independently chaired, currently by a local agent.

The Chairs of both the WDHF Homelessness Subgroup and the Landlords Forum are members of the Wycombe District Housing Forum (WDHF) Core Group.

Membership of the WDHF Core Group also includes the Chairs of the other two WDHF Subgroups. These Subgroups focus on Development and Management issues respectively, with membership being comprised mainly from Registered Providers (RPs).

The WDHF Core Group membership also includes the Council's Cabinet Member for Housing and managers from the Council's housing service, Red Kite Community Housing and Buckinghamshire County Council. The WDHF Core Group meetings are held on a 6 monthly basis and their remit includes reviewing feedback from the Subgroups and reviewing the progress on the Council's Homelessness Strategy.

6.6 Housing Allocations and Lettings

In cooperation with the other Districts in Buckinghamshire, Wycombe operates a Choice Based Lettings Scheme, known as Bucks Home Choice (BHC), for the allocation of social housing for rent. The Bucks Home Choice Allocation Policy was reviewed in 2018/2019 and the new policy was implemented at the beginning of October 2019.

The following table shows the number of live applications registered with the Council by dwelling size within the five Bands A to E (Band A being the highest priority need) as at mid-December 2019. For example, the total number of 442 household applicants in Band D for one bed accommodation includes 204 households registered as seeking accommodation for people over 55.

BHC Band	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Size of Property Required						
1 bed	43	37	49	442	46	617
2 bed	18	143	43	47	46	297
3 bed or larger	21	236	14	18	26	315

6.7 Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a key element of the Government's welfare reforms. Considerable work has been carried out during the time of the 2014 - 2019 Strategy, including regular meetings of the Wycombe Welfare Reform Group, staff training, developing links with the DWP and gaining an understanding of Universal Credit and its impacts.

Moving forward, there will be regular meetings of the Bucks Stakeholder Group, which are coordinated by the DWP and cover updates on Universal Credit and welfare reforms.

6.8 Repossessions

The Council monitors the approaches from households regarding mortgage repossessions. During the period of Homelessness Strategy 2014 - 2019 the number of approaches has generally been falling. The monitoring continues in case the numbers increase.

6.9 Domestic Abuse

The Council recognises that everybody has the right to a life free from abuse. The Housing Options staff are trained to work with everyone experiencing domestic abuse.

The Council works with, and provides grant funding assistance to, a local Women's Aid Charity - Wycombe Women's Aid. Women are able to access their services for independent advice, including placement and can, if it is an appropriate option, be assisted into refuges in other areas.

6.10 Supply of Affordable Housing

The supply of affordable housing for rent comprises the re-letting of existing homes when they become vacant and the delivery of additional affordable housing, mainly via the development of new homes.

The District Council does not retain its own housing stock but works with a number of Registered Providers (RPs). The RP with the largest amount of existing affordable housing stock in the District is Red Kite Community Housing but there are many other RPs operating in the District. Additional affordable homes are also being provided by RPs, mainly delivered via new-build developments although some RPs also purchase existing dwellings from the market.

Although some development sites are purchased outright by RPs, the majority of homes are currently delivered via the planning system - known as Section 106 agreements. These require that new-build market housing above certain thresholds must include a proportion of affordable housing. Details are contained in policies in the Council's Local Plan, adopted in August 2019, and in subsequent draft guidance.

New affordable housing delivery is therefore, to a significant extent, dependent upon the development of sites for new homes for market sale.

Whilst RPs are able to submit bids to the Government agency Homes England, in recent years Homes England programmes have mainly focussed on strategic work, rather than on individual developments. RPs are reliant on raising private finance to fund new development programmes. Most new RP developments for rent are based on the RPs charging affordable rents (which are higher than social rents) - with no grant funding. The Council does however continue to liaise with Homes England, retaining awareness of funding opportunities.

During the 5 years from the start of the financial year 2014/2015 to the end of the financial year 2018/2019, a total of 416 affordable properties for rent or affordable home ownership were delivered via new development or purchase. This included 110 Extra Care properties.

6.11 Specialised Supported Housing

The District Council works with Buckinghamshire County Council, which provides strategic direction and predictions of need for specialised housing need for interested stakeholders. From the findings, a large Extra Care development, known as the Hughenden Gardens Retirement Village, was developed by the Extra Care Charitable Trust and opened in the Spring of 2018.

The forming of the new unitary Buckinghamshire Council presents an opportunity to continue to develop this joined up approach between the statutory organisations and the providers.

6.12 Gypsies Travellers & Travelling Show-people

The Council's approach to the need for pitches is set out in a planning policy in the Wycombe District Local Plan, adopted in August 2019. This is based on the assessment of local needs identified in the Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe District Council's 'Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment Final Report,' published in 2017.

7. Recommendations from the Shelter Review - for the new Strategy:

- * Build on the established and very successful partnership working with local agencies to prevent homelessness and provide a more integrated service.
- * Identify outstanding actions from the homelessness forum and rough sleeper group.
- * Consult local landlords and agents on what would encourage them to let properties via the Council.
- * Address the less successful areas of partnership working with the statutory agencies, particularly with the County Council.
- * Review the Strategy towards the private sector taking into account the challenges - in particular the roll out of Universal Credit and out of area placements from other authorities.
- * Develop a support strategy aimed at tenancy sustainment and preventing recurring homelessness.
- * Create affordable and social housing, working both in partnership with key stakeholders.
- * A multi-agency approach is required to tackle the issue of substance misuse, particularly the influx of heroin.
- * Prevention work to address rough sleeping and tackle a core group with no recourse to public funds.
- * Address the provision of advice to the vulnerable groups.
- * Provide training to newer staff members, and temporary staff, on dealing with particular vulnerable groups, including rough sleepers.
- * Minimise waiting times to see clients on the day.
- * Address mortgage repossessions and include information on mortgage arrears on the website.

- * Create a range of accessible tools to enable stakeholders and applicants to provide feedback.
- * Develop the website to provide advice and tools for the prevention and reduction of homelessness.
- * Further identify where and how early prevention can be delivered, to intervene before people are legally threatened with homelessness.
- * Develop outreach working to engage with potential service users at an earlier stage to maximise opportunities to both prevent homelessness and to prevent people sleeping rough.
- * Consult service users on the new strategy.
- * Build on the expertise of members of staff in key areas beyond immediate homelessness (e.g. money advice).
- * When a new homelessness strategy is adopted training should be given to all staff on the contents of the strategy and their role in implementation. This training should also be included in the induction training for all new staff in the homelessness service.
- * Disseminate the key messages of the new strategy, to other council teams and departments, the voluntary sector and other statutory sector bodies, in particular the County Council.
- * The new strategy needs to link with other local strategies and programmes (health, & wellbeing, education, employment) and neighbouring authorities.

8. The Strategy 2020 – 2022

The aim is for the Wycombe District to have a Strategy that is proactive, is regularly monitored and reviewed annually in order to be responsive to emerging needs, until the new Buckinghamshire Council has its own Strategy in place.

The process involved a steering group of partner agencies, working with Council Officers and, as a result, an initial consultation draft Strategy Action Plan was prepared.

The draft Action Plan was presented to a wider group of agencies at a meeting of the Wycombe District Housing Forum Homelessness Subgroup.

This draft Action Plan was sent out for public consultation for 8 weeks during August and September 2019.

The issues raised in the responses were considered at the Homelessness Subgroup and agreed amendments were made.

The amended draft Action Plan was circulated to Council Members and an evening presentation/ question & answer session was held in October 2019.

The objectives of the new Strategy were identified via the recommendations of the homelessness review and from the various consultation methods that took place.

The objectives fall into three main themes.

- * a) Objectives aimed at minimising homelessness and rough sleeping in the District through prevention and relief;
- * b) The provision of affordable housing, and;
- * c) To address and enhance issues of housing quality aimed at improving health and wellbeing in the private sector.

The Objectives of the new Strategy

The objectives contained in Parts 1 and 2 of the Strategy are derived from a combination of the homelessness review, the continuation of actions from the current Strategy and the discussions with stakeholder partners. These are set out as follows:

Strategy Part 1 - Strategic objectives to minimise homelessness and rough sleeping through prevention and relief

1. The Council is to have a Corporate commitment to produce a Strategy for the prevention and relief of homelessness, to include strategic housing issues.

This is essentially to have an adopted Strategy, which is to be publicised, regularly monitored and reviewed annually to consider if any amendments are required.

2. Continue to develop partnership working with agencies to prevent and reduce homelessness and rough sleeping in the Wycombe District

This is to include:

- * Continuing to gather information/ statistics on levels / trends for homelessness and rough sleeping in the Wycombe District, and comparing statistics for the Wycombe District with other Councils.
- * Continuing with the current Outreach Service - for assisting rough sleepers to access accommodation and support.

- * Provide targeted support for rough sleepers, bidding for funding when opportunities arise and making effective use of funding when allocated.
- * Developing closer working relationships with agencies specialising in support for clients, particularly those affected by mental health issues and / or substance misuse.
- * Reach and support people at risk of homelessness at the earliest opportunity, aiming to prevent them becoming homeless.
- * Obtain feedback on the Council's Housing Options service from service users.
- * Monitor the impacts on homeless households following the implementation of the amended Bucks Home Choice Allocation Policy.
- * Seek to prevent mortgage repossessions.
- * Continue to work closely with Wycombe Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme (WRDGS) to assist households who are not in priority need.
- * Encourage the provision of emergency accommodation during periods of severe weather

3. Continue to implement the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

This includes continuing to deliver appropriate information for clients to obtain advice and support, giving consideration to developing a self-help guide and monitoring of the Duty to Refer from public bodies.

4. Provision of sufficient good quality temporary accommodation

This includes minimising use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation, and enhancing the provision of temporary accommodation.

5. Monitor and respond to the impacts of Universal Credit

This includes closer working between Officers in the Council's Housing service and officers in the Department for Work and Pensions and partner agencies.

6. Review and develop partnerships with providers who are working with clients with additional needs who may be at risk of homelessness, including monitoring of existing Protocols and development of additional Protocols as appropriate

There are various client groups, including prison leavers, young people leaving care, 16/17 year olds, people with complex needs, people being discharged from hospital, people needing move-on accommodation and people who are homeless and have no recourse to public funds.

The Action Plan Appendix to this Strategy includes a number of actions within these objectives, setting out the partners involved and the target outcomes.

Strategy Part 2: Strategic objectives for the provision of affordable housing for those in housing need

The Council continues to work with Registered Providers of social housing. These are organisations registered with the Regulator of Social Housing - requiring the providers to meet certain regulatory standards for their homes, their rents and the tenancies they offer.

The main source of additional affordable housing is new build homes. Potential sources include:

* Section 106 opportunities via the Council's planning policy - where the Registered Provider acquires the new homes which are designated for affordable housing within major private sector developments. The Council's new Local Plan policies support the development of major sites - which assists in bringing forward affordable homes. Housing officers work closely with officers in the Council's planning and sustainability service in securing opportunities for new affordable homes via Section 106;

* Registered Providers acquiring whole sites and developing homes of mixed affordable tenures, including homes for rent and shared ownership, as well as homes for market sale. High land and property values impact on this;

* Registered Providers purchasing homes from the open market. This can be achieved with subsidy from the District Council - via Section 106 accumulated financial developer contributions provided from other sites in the District, in lieu of on-site provision.

The key priority for the Council's housing service is access to affordable general needs homes for rent. The Local Plan policy approach includes a requirement for a proportion of affordable housing for low cost home ownership - mainly shared ownership. In addition, officers work with Buckinghamshire County Council and specialist providers for the delivery of supported housing accommodation for people with disabilities, where there is an identified need.

The Council's new Local Plan policy and draft guidance regarding affordable housing sets out the percentages, tenure mix and dwelling size mix of the affordable homes required.

The Action Plan Appendix to this Strategy includes a number of actions within this objective. The objectives in Part 2, the provision of affordable housing to those in housing need are:

7. Provision of appropriate affordable settled accommodation

This is to include maximising the use of nominations to affordable housing and encouraging the provision of good quality private rented sector accommodation.

8. Monitor the levels of new home building delivery in the district and maximise the provision of affordable housing, within Local Plan policy and guidance

This includes:

- * Achieving the new house building target through the Local Plan;
- * Securing and reviewing the quality of new housing;
- * Supporting funding bids to Homes England/ Government;
- * Working with RPs to maximise the provision of affordable / social housing within Local Plan policy;
- * Use Council resources to enable the provision of affordable housing;
- * Enable the provision of specialised housing in accordance with identified needs.

The Action Plan Appendix to this Strategy includes a number of actions within these objectives, setting out the partners involved and the target outcomes.

Strategy Part 3: Strategic objectives to enhance the quality of housing in the District including standards in the private sector and the use of available funding to improve the health and well-being of residents

National Issues

This section of the Strategy sets out the Council's intentions for improving housing conditions, particularly in the private sector. It is also to outline the approach to providing assistance via The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 in delivering preventative assistance and the Council's approach to The Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation.

The English Housing Survey is a continuous national survey commissioned by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). It collects information about people's housing circumstances and the condition and energy efficiency of housing in England.

Key findings set out in the MHCLG Headline Report 2017-18 include:

- The energy efficiency of English homes has increased considerably in the last 20 years, but has not increased since 2015.
- In 2017, the average SAP rating of English dwellings was 62 points, up from 45 points in 1996. This increase was evident in all tenures. However, the increase appears to be slowing and there was no change in the average SAP rating of homes between 2016 and 2017 (in any tenure).
- There remains a lower proportion of non-decent homes in the social sector than in the private rented and owner occupied sectors.
- In 2017, 13% of dwellings in the social rented sector failed to meet the Decent Homes Standard. This is lower than the proportion of private rented (25%) and owner occupied (19%) homes.

The Local Context

The Council provides grants and other financial assistance to enable improvements and/ or adaptations to be carried out to homes to make them safe for occupation and/ or accessible for people with disabilities and enable people to remain independent at home for longer.

In terms of housing standards, the Council works to ensure warm, safe and healthy homes for all, to include people living in owner occupied, privately rented or housing association properties.

The Council's overall objective is for the housing stock to be of good standard, energy efficient and free from significant hazards, and also for the housing stock to be suitable to meet the needs of disabled and older residents.

If people believe the condition of their property is affecting their health or safety, they can contact the Council and we will assess the property using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). This assessment focuses on the 29 hazards that are most likely to be present in housing, allowing us to evaluate any risks to health and safety that may be present in the home.

Following the assessment, the Council will provide advice and, if necessary, take enforcement action in accordance with our Enforcement Policy to ensure the property meets an acceptable standard.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

A key change from Government is the extension of the HMO licensing scheme first enacted in 2006, such that with effect from 1st October 2018 all HMOs with five or more people living in them who form more than one household must have a Council-granted HMO licence.

Preventative Assistance

The Council recognises that living in poor housing has an adverse effect on physical and mental health, and the value people place on leading fulfilling lives and staying independent for longer.

Under the Housing Renewal Policy, a number of types of assistance have been developed to target resources in preventative programmes in order to help prevent hospital admissions, additional medical interventions and ill health; and to aid speedy discharges from hospital. The aim is to reduce the burden on health and social care services whilst helping people to remain safe at home.

In the main this is funded through innovative assistance developed under the Better Care Fund, and includes measures such as the Healthy Homes on Prescription Grant, Flexible Home Improvement Loans, funding for energy efficiency measures and insulation upgrades - all in addition to the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants offering.

The objectives in Part 3 - to address issues of housing quality and improve health and wellbeing in the private sector are outlined as follows:

Objective 9 - Enhance the quality of housing in the district, including standards in the private sector and improving the health and wellbeing of vulnerable residents

This is to include engaging with owners, landlords, tenants, agents and other appropriate organisations regarding:

- * Housing standards;
- * Requests for service on issues of any disrepair in residential accommodation;
- * HMO licensing and management;
- * Continuing with partners to deliver a fuel poverty strategy - using available funding streams;
- * Improving the energy efficiency levels for properties in all tenures;
- * Promoting and delivering Flexible Home Improvement Loan products;
- * Reducing the number of long term empty homes in the private sector, to bring empty properties back into use;
- * Undertaking adaptations to residential properties and improving access to housing for households which include one or more persons with a disability;
- * Improving the wellbeing of vulnerable residents through preventative interventions, using resources from the Better Care Fund.

The Action Plan Appendix to this Strategy includes a number of actions within these objectives, setting out the partners involved and the target outcomes.

9. Future Monitoring and Review

In addition to quarterly scrutiny of the Action Plan by the Wycombe District Housing Forum Homelessness Subgroup, the Wycombe District Housing Forum Core Group will review the Strategy and Action Plan annually, including consideration of any amendments or additions required for improvement or to respond to any changes in legislation or Government guidance.

10. Glossary of Housing terms

Affordable housing

Affordable housing includes social rented, affordable rented, intermediate housing and starter homes, provided to households whose needs are not met by the market.

Affordable rented housing

Affordable rented housing is let by registered providers (RPs) of social housing (also known as housing associations) to people who are eligible and qualify for the Council's housing register. Affordable rents are above social rent but are not in excess of 80 per cent of local market rent.

Assured shorthold tenancy (AST)

The type of tenancy generally used for letting homes in the private rented sector.

Assured tenancy

This is the type of tenancy agreement usually offered by housing associations.

Choice-based lettings (CBL)

Choice-based lettings schemes are designed to allow an element of choice for people applying for housing association homes and existing tenants who want a transfer. As properties become available for letting, full details are advertised on the Bucks Home Choice (BHC) website and eligible applicants can express interest in suitable, available properties.

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

A grant to help pay for housing adaptations essential to help people who have a disability stay in their homes.

Fuel Poverty

Households which need to spend more than 10% of their income on fuel to heat their home to an adequate standard.

Help to Buy

A government programme which aims to help first time buyers, and those looking to move home, purchase a residential property.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

Properties with five or more people living in them who form more than one household.

Housing Register

The Council's list of people applying for social housing including housing owned and/or managed by housing associations. People have to meet certain criteria to join the register.

Intermediate Housing

Intermediate housing includes shared ownership, shared equity schemes and discounted market sales schemes.

Local Housing Allowance (LHA)

Valuation Office Agency Rent Officers determine LHA rates used to calculate HB for tenants renting from private Landlords.

LHA rates are based on private market rents being paid by tenants in the Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA), which is the area within which a person might reasonably be expected to live.

Local Plan

The Wycombe Local Plan was adopted on 19 August 2019. It defines how future development should take place, allocates particular areas of land for development and designates other areas to be protected from development. It also includes a set of policies to guide the location and nature of development, including housing.

Low cost home ownership

This covers a range of schemes intended to help people into home ownership who are unable to afford to buy a home on the open market.

National Homelessness Advice Service (NHAS)

An organisation that provides free expert advice, training and support to housing professionals, working in local Councils, voluntary advice agencies, local Citizen Advice and public authorities in England.

National Landlords Association

An association for private residential landlords which provides support, advice, information and guidance to keep members up-to-date on laws and regulations.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

This sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied, alongside the Government's requirements for the planning system.

Possession order

The Court order that allows a landlord, or lender in the case of homeowners, to take possession of a property.

Registered Provider (RP)

A not-for-profit organisation set up to provide low cost housing to rent and/ or to buy - sometimes known as housing associations. RPs are registered providers of social housing and are regulated - to be viable, efficient and well-governed - by the Regulator of Social Housing.

Rough Sleepers

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) defines people who sleep rough as:

People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or "bashes").

Section 21 notice

In England and Wales, a section 21 notice, also known as a section 21 notice of possession or a section 21 eviction, is the notice which a landlord must give to their tenant to begin the process to take possession of a property let on an assured shorthold tenancy without providing a reason for wishing to take possession.

Section 106 agreement

This is a planning agreement between a developer and the local authority. The local authority grants planning permission subject to the developer agreeing to provide some benefit to the local community, for example affordable housing. The agreement applies to the land.

Shared Ownership

A scheme that allows people to buy a part share in a home, if they are unable to buy the whole property, with another party (often an RP/ housing association) retaining the remainder. Shared owners can often increase their stake in the home, through a process known as 'staircasing'. Shared ownership

schemes are offered through RPs, typically at between 25 per cent and 75 per cent share of the full value of the home. A capped rent is paid on the remaining share.

Social rented housing

Rented housing which is owned and managed by housing associations or RPs is provided on an assured tenancy at a rent level set in accordance with a formula set by Government.

Severe weather emergency protocol – SWEP

Aims to get rough sleepers off the streets during periods of severe weather, including night temperatures of zero and below, by providing emergency accommodation.

Temporary accommodation (TA)

Bed and Breakfast (B&B), hostel accommodation or privately leased accommodation that the Council may use to accommodate homeless households.

Universal Credit (UC)

A benefits scheme of monthly payments for eligible people who are unemployed or on low incomes.

Disclaimer

This glossary is designed for the purpose of explaining some of the terms used in connection with this Strategy but is not intended to provide a detailed legal interpretation.

11. APPENDIX: ACTION PLAN 2020 – 2022

Appendix

Wycombe District Homelessness, Rough Sleeping, Private Sector and Affordable Housing Strategy

Appendix: Action Plan 2020 – 2022

PART 1: To minimise homelessness and rough sleeping through prevention and relief

Objectives	What will we do?	Who will deliver this?	Target/ Outcome
1. Corporate commitment to produce a Strategy to prevent and reduce Homelessness following an external Review of the previous Strategy, including strategic housing issues	<p>1.1a) Have an adopted Strategy in place</p> <p>1.1b) Publicise the new Strategy, following adoption</p> <p>1.1c) Regularly monitor progress & consider annually if any amendments to the Strategy are required</p>	WDC Officers and partner organisations	<p>a) New Strategy in place early 2020</p> <p>b) Hold an event to share the new Strategy with colleagues and partner organisations</p> <p>c) Action Plan to be monitored quarterly at the Wycombe District Housing Forum (WDHF) Homelessness Subgroup; Strategy and Action Plan to be considered annually at the WDHF Core Group</p>
2. Continue to develop partnership working to	2.1a) Continue to gather information/ stats on Rough Sleepers and on current levels / trends of	Officers from WDC Housing Service, agencies	<p>a) (i) Estimate the numbers of rough sleepers monthly</p> <p>a) (ii) Carry out an annual street count/ estimate</p>

<p>prevent and reduce Homelessness and rough sleeping in the Wycombe District</p>	<p>Homelessness & Rough Sleeping in Wycombe District</p> <p>b) Compare stats for Wycombe District with other councils</p>	<p>including YMCA, OTW, Outreach, WHC, WRDGS; also Homeless Link for the annual count/ estimate</p>	<p>b) Quarterly reporting of data on homelessness and rough sleeping to the WDHF Homelessness Subgroup meetings - reporting to include numbers of prevention cases, relief cases and those owed the main housing duty</p>
	<p>2.2 a) Support and monitor the current Outreach Service in Bucks for assisting rough sleepers to access accommodation and support</p> <p>b) Consider future provision of the service in the longer term</p>	<p>Officers from WDC Housing Service and partner agencies</p>	<p>a) Minimise the incidences of rough sleeping in the Wycombe District</p> <p>b) Provision of funding support for the Outreach service, in partnership with other District Councils in Buckinghamshire</p>
	<p>2.3 Provide targeted support for rough sleepers, using Flexible Homelessness Support Grant; Rapid Rehousing Pathway funding etc. - working towards the Government aim of ending rough sleeping</p>	<p>Officers from WDC Housing Service and partner agencies</p>	<p>Provide appropriate assistance to rough sleepers, including the provision of emergency accommodation and tenancy sustainment once in accommodation</p>
	<p>2.4 Explore opportunities and where appropriate submit applications for available funding</p>	<p>Officers from WDC Housing Service and partner agencies</p>	<p>Submit funding bids for appropriate initiatives</p>

	2.5 Develop closer working relationships with agencies specialising in support for clients affected by substance misuse	Officers from WDC Housing Service, the Street Support Partnership, One Recovery Bucks and Thames Valley Police	Contribute to the work of the organisations providing outreach help for clients affected by substance misuse to engage with specialist services
	2.6 Develop closer working relationships with agencies specialising in support for clients affected by mental health issues	Officers from WDC Housing Service and the Street Support Partnership, Bucks CC commissioning and specialist mental health agencies	Explore potential for provision of additional help for clients to engage with specialist mental health support services
	2.7 Reach and support clients at risk of homelessness at the earliest opportunity, with the aim to prevent homelessness	Officers from WDC Housing Service and partner agencies - including P3, Connection Support, WHC; Targeted use of DHP funding	Promotion of agencies to notify WDC of potential clients (with consent)

	2.8 Obtain feedback on the Housing Options service from service users - including via an online website link to a survey form	Officers from WDC Housing Service	Findings to be reviewed and shared annually at the WDHF Homelessness Subgroup
	2.9 Monitor the impacts on homeless households following the implementation of the amended Bucks Home Choice Allocation Policy	Officers from WDC Housing Service	Findings to be reviewed and shared annually at the WDHF Homelessness Subgroup
	2.10 Actively support households who are at risk of homelessness, with the aim to prevent mortgage repossessions	Officers from WDC Housing Service and partner agencies	(i) Monitor the number of approaches involving provision of advice for households in mortgage arrears/ facing repossession (ii) Update the information available on the Council's website
	2.11 Continue to work closely with Wycombe Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme (WRDGS) with the aim to assist clients who are not in priority need	Officers from WDC Housing Service and partner agency - WRDGS	(i) WRDGS figures to be reported at the quarterly WDHF Homelessness Subgroup ii) Arrange review meeting(s) in connection with annual revenue grant
	2.12 Encourage provision of emergency accommodation during periods of severe weather	Agency partners and Officers from WDC Housing Service	Ensure adequate arrangements are in place for Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)

3. Continue to implement the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017	3.1 Continue to deliver appropriate information for clients, including use of information from NHAS and consider developing a self-help guide	Officers from WDC Housing Service	(i) Provide information via website links to NHAS factsheets for members of the public (ii) Aim to have a self-help guide available on the District Council's website
	3.2 Ensure information is available for clients to obtain advice and support	Agency partners and Officers from WDC Housing Service	Carry out an annual review of service mapping information
	3.3 Monitoring of the Duty to Refer from public bodies and impacts it has on the housing service	Officers from WDC and other public bodies	Provision of monitoring statistics to the WDHF Homelessness Subgroup and liaison with the organisations
4. Provision of sufficient good quality temporary accommodation	4.1 Minimise use of Bed & Breakfast Accommodation - no placement of family households into B&B other than in exceptional circumstances or emergencies and then for less than 6 weeks	Officers from WDC Housing Service	(i) Minimise use of B&B for single person households – monitor and report quarterly to the WDHF Homelessness Subgroup (ii) Minimise the use of B&B for family households – monitor and report quarterly to the WDHF Homelessness Subgroup
	4.2 No placement of 16/17 year olds by the WDC housing service into B&B	Officers from WDC Housing Service and Bucks CC	Joint Protocol with Buckinghamshire County Council Social Services – monitor and report quarterly
	4.3 Enhance provision of temporary accommodation	Officers from WDC Housing	Deliver the Desborough Road project for new accommodation - to replace Saunderton Lodge

		Service and other services at WDC	
	4.4 Provide funding for the project for 8 additional homes for letting on ASTs to homeless families	Officers from WDC Housing and Harrow Churches HA	Enable to project to be delivered by March 2020
5. Monitor and respond to the impacts of Universal Credit	5.1 Closer partnership working between Officers in the Council's Housing service and agencies involved in UC cases	Officers from WDC Housing Service and partner agencies - including DWP, RPs & CAB	WDC attendance at meetings of the County-wide Stakeholder Group run by the DWP; sharing information and providing feedback
6. Review and develop partnerships with providers working with clients with additional needs who may be at risk of homelessness, including monitoring /	6.1 Strengthen links with the Prison Service and develop a protocol for prison leavers, to include those with complex needs	Officers from WDC Housing Service and the Prison Service	(i) Working with other District Councils in Buckinghamshire, to fund a specialist Probation and Prison liaison worker (ii) Develop and agree a Protocol for prison leavers who need access to housing
	6.2 Monitor the effectiveness of the Protocol with Social Services for families considered to be intentionally homeless	Officers from WDC Housing Service and BCC Social Services	Discuss / report any feedback regarding the existing Protocol - annually

development of Protocols	6.3 Monitor the effectiveness of the Protocol with Social Care for 16/17 year olds	Officers from WDC Housing Service and Bucks CC Social Services	Discuss / report any feedback regarding the existing Protocol - annually
	6.4 Monitor the effectiveness of the Protocol for young people leaving care	Officers from WDC Housing Service and Bucks CC Social Services	Discuss / report any feedback regarding the existing Protocol - annually
	6.5 Continue to work closely with Women's Aid services in helping victims of domestic abuse	Officers from WDC Housing Service and Wycombe Women's Aid	Consider if a Protocol is required
	6.6 Develop partnership working with primary care providers for people with complex needs, including a protocol for people being discharged from hospital	Officers from WDC Housing Service, Bucks housing leads and the Community Mental Health Service	(i) Develop and agree a Protocol for people leaving hospital who need access to housing (ii) Develop and agree a Protocol for people with mental health issues who need access to housing
	6.7 Develop move-on arrangements from specialist/ supported accommodation	Officers from WDC Housing Service and partner agencies	Explore potential options for more move-on opportunities

	6.8 Develop partnership assistance for people experiencing homelessness who have no recourse to public funds - signposting to include specialist agencies	Officers from WDC Housing Service, BCC Social Services and Refugee Support/ Red Cross	Specialist external agencies to discuss findings / feedback at meetings of the WDHF Homelessness Subgroup
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PART 2: The provision of affordable housing for those in housing need

7. Provision of appropriate affordable settled accommodation	7.1 Maximise the use of nominations / allocations to local affordable housing	WDC Officers to monitor the effectiveness of Bucks Home Choice policy	Monitor the number of nominations via Bucks Home Choice and share findings annually at the WDHF Homelessness Subgroup
	7.2 Encourage the provision of good quality private rented sector accommodation for prevention & relief of homelessness	Officers from WDC Housing Service WRDGS; RPs and Private Landlords	(i) Engage with landlords and agents, including regular Landlord Forum meetings; (ii) Achieve an increased use of the private rented sector; target of 15 households per quarter - monitor and report quarterly
8 Monitor the levels of new home building delivery in the district and	8.1 Achieve the new house building target through the Local Plan and secure the delivery of housing	Officers from WDC, Private Developers,	10,925 homes to be provided in the period 2013 to 2033 (average 546.25 dwellings per annum)

maximise the provision of affordable housing, within Local Plan policy and guidance		Landowners and RPs	
	8.2 Secure quality new housing development through planning negotiations and review quality of new housing	Officers from WDC, Private Developers and RPs	Officers from the housing service respond to consultation from Officers in the Planning and Sustainability Service at the planning application stage and also view some of the affordable dwellings on each scheme around the handover date
	8.3 Support appropriate funding bids to Homes England/ Government	Officers from WDC, RPs and Homes England	Submit funding bids as appropriate within the prescribed timescales
	8.4 Continue to work with RPs to maximise the provision of affordable / social housing within Local Plan policy, including shared ownership, shared equity and affordable home ownership tenures	Officers from WDC, RPs and Private Developers. May include grant from Homes England / MHCLG	Delivery of homes in accordance with the Local Plan and needs identified in the Buckinghamshire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA)

	8.5 Use of Council resources to enable the provision of affordable housing Resources from S106 financial developer contributions; land/ properties in WDC ownership	Officers from WDC and RPs; possible resources from S106 financial developer contributions; land/ properties in WDC	(i) Make effective use of accumulated S106 financial developer contributions to deliver additional affordable housing (ii) Work with WDC Estates team regarding land or properties in which WDC has ownership and which may have potential for affordable housing
	8.6 Enable the provision of specialised housing in accordance with identified needs	Officers from WDC, Bucks CC, RPs and other appropriate organisations	Work with Bucks CC and housing providers to deliver appropriate specialised housing accommodation to help meet identified needs

PART 3: To enhance the quality of housing in the District including standards in the private sector and use available funding to improve the health and well-being of residents

9. Enhance the quality of housing in the district, including standards in the private sector	9.1 Take a pro-active approach to engaging with owner-occupiers and landlords & tenants of rented properties regarding housing standards	Officers from WDC	(i) Provide information via the Council's website (ii) Provide information at the Landlord Forum, to include information regarding landlord responsibilities
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	9.2 Engage with owner-occupiers, tenants and landlords of rented properties in respect of requests for service regarding issues of any disrepair in residential accommodation - in accordance with legislation	Officers from WDC, private sector landlords, letting agents, Registered Providers & other agencies (including potential increased budget)	(i) Respond within timescales based on level of priority (ii) Application of Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004 and appropriate enforcement action Monitor & report quarterly
	9.3 Engage with landlords, tenants & other appropriate organisations - to ensure mandatory HMO licensing is undertaken as appropriate in accordance with legislation	Officers from WDC, private sector landlords, Bucks New University and letting agents	Application of Part 2 of the Housing Act 2004 and appropriate enforcement action Monitor & report quarterly
	9.4 Support the WDC Housing Options Service, Bucks CC Children's Services and Adult Social Care and other voluntary sector organisations in their use of private sector homes by inspecting the properties	Officers from WDC, including the Housing Options Service; Bucks CC Children's Services and Adult Social Care; other	Property inspections to be arranged within 10 working days of referral Report quarterly

	prior to the commencement of letting	voluntary sector organisations; also private sector landlords & letting agents	
	9.5 Explore options to develop partnerships with other agencies	Officers from WDC, Bucks CC, Thames Valley, Trading Standards, Fire & Rescue, HMRC, Immigration and other agencies	Develop intelligence-led enforcement via information sharing protocols Report quarterly
	9.6 Continue with partners to deliver a fuel poverty strategy - using funding from the Better Care Fund and other external funding streams	Officers from WDC, National Energy Foundation, Government Agencies, local authority partners, housing providers etc.	Report quarterly

	9.7 Improve energy efficiency levels for properties in all tenures in accordance with the Housing Act 2004 and The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England & Wales) Regulations 2015	Officers from WDC, housing providers, owners, Trading Standards etc.	Report quarterly
	9.8 Continue to promote and deliver Flexible Home Improvement Loan (FHIL) products	Officers from WDC & property owners – subject to qualifying criteria	To spend the allocated funding - allocations to be linked with demand Annual monitoring and report
	9.9 Reduce number of long term empty homes in the private sector and continue to work with owners to bring empty properties back into use	Officers from WDC & property owners	(i) Monitor the number of long term empty homes in the district and report quarterly (ii) Report quarterly on the number of long term empty homes brought back into use (iii) Review and update the Council's private sector housing improvement and adaptations policies
	9.10 Undertake adaptations to residential properties using resources from the Better	Officers from WDC, Bucks CC, residential	(i) Report quarterly on the numbers of adaptations to homes

	Care Fund, including mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)	property owners, NHS Occupational Therapy teams and GP practices	(ii) Report quarterly on the predicted savings to the NHS and social care due to adaptations being provided
	9.11 Improve access to housing for households which include one or more persons with a disability, using a range of resources under the private sector housing improvement and adaptations policy – including discretionary DFGs, Health funding, RPs funding, Relocation Grant and Healthy Homes on Prescription	Officers from WDC, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Bucks Health Trust, BCC and RPs	Develop, with partners, a central list of adapted properties and encourage owners occupiers and tenants to apply for DFG funding, where works are required Report quarterly
	9.12 Be proactive in promoting and positively improving the health and wellbeing of vulnerable residents using resources from the Better Care Fund	Officers from WDC, Bucks CC, residential property owners, NHS Occupational Therapy teams and GP practices	(i) Report quarterly on the number of Healthy Homes on Prescription (HHOP) referral cases agreed with NHS partners (ii) Report quarterly on the predicted savings to the NHS and social care due to HHOP being provided (iii) Report quarterly on the number of hospital discharges being expedited by HHOP interventions