

## WEST KENT JOINT HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY ACTION PLAN: July 2013 - JUNE 2016

### STRATEGIC PRIORITY ONE: MAXIMISING HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION THROUGH AN ENHANCED HOUSING OPTIONS SERVICE

*By 2016, our goal is to develop a highly effective, personalised housing options service that empowers customers to make the best choices for themselves*

Objective	Actions	Progress Update	Lead/Key Partners
To ensure that we fully understand and analyse emerging trends in homelessness and that changing demands on the service are understood and planned for	1. Continue to provide annual estimates of Rough Sleepers to the DCLG. Investigate emergency provision for rough sleepers (using 'No Second Night Out' principles).	2012 rough sleeper estimate: SDC: 1, TMBC: 4, TWBC: 10	Housing Needs Managers (HNMS)
	2. Continue to monitor housing advice / prevention cases; specifically the number of approaches and the reasons for homelessness	Same software now being used by all 3 LAs to record cases  Options cases for 1.7.11 to 30.6.12: SDC (tbc) TMBC – 926, TWBC - 1319  Options cases for 1.7.12 to 30.6.13: SDC (tbc), TMBC – 640, TWBC - 893	
	3. Review format for collecting customer feedback, developing a standardised approach across the three authorities	All three authorities have now reviewed format for collecting customer feedback and are using similar systems to record customers views on the service they have received	
To ensure that the impacts of cuts to support and other services are understood by Housing Options Teams, customers and stakeholders, and prioritise resources accordingly	4. Monitor changes in legislation and emerging Government policy, analysing impacts on West Kent	Ongoing: especially Impacts of Localism Act and welfare reform – Universal Credit, benefit cap, 'bedroom tax', single room rate for under 35s. Also LAs ability to discharge homelessness duty into private sector	HNMs /Strategy & Enabling Managers
	5. Work closely with statutory and voluntary agencies to minimise the impact of savings to be made	Discussions have taken place with agencies such as CAB and Porchlight so that services can be retained where possible albeit at a reduced level	Homelessness Strategy Group

To hone our "prevention toolkit", ensuring that we are maximising the options that are available and making best use of available techniques and resource	6. Improve mediation services for people facing eviction from the family home (NB: Additional training resources may be required)	We have improved our links with advice services such as those provided by the Citizens' Advice Bureaux and housing associations. We are also having more successful joint working with Social Services – carrying out joint assessments of 16/17 year olds, attending regular 'team round the family' meetings and contributing to 'Troubled Families' work	HNMs
	7. Identify opportunities for the three teams to share best practice more effectively and develop the skills sets within the Housing Options Teams	We have held shared training events and will continue doing so	HNMs
	8. In appropriate cases, promote the take-up of Disabled Facilities Grants to adapt properties and prevent homelessness	Ongoing	HNMs/ Private Sector Housing Managers
	9. Promote the use of Court desks to advise/assist customers attending Possession hearings	TWBC recently provided funding to Tunbridge Wells CAB to enable them to continue to provide a Court desk at Tunbridge Wells County Court Desk	HNMs
	10. Continue to refer people to CAB and Tonbridge Debt Advice service so they can receive specialist assistance with debts	Ongoing	HNMs
	11. Adopt the Kent wide Rent Arrears Protocol (due to be completed by Dec 2013) and secure the commitment of partners to implement in all relevant cases	December 2013	HNMs
	12. Provide housing options training to staff from the Welfare Advice Service to enable them to provide a combined housing and benefits surgery to customers at the Tonbridge Gateway (NB: funded to June 2013)	Welfare Advice Service is continuing in-house at TMBC	TMBC

To provide clear and timely information to people threatened with homelessness so that they are fully aware of their options and can make realistic choices	13. Monitor the success of Porchlight's county-wide education project to raise awareness in schools of the realities of homelessness and the housing market	Porchlight are continuing to visit schools in West Kent	HNMs
	14. Review and update the content and format of information that is provided to customers (via websites, leaflets & general correspondence)	Ongoing	
To build on the HERO project, develop more holistic approaches to prevention that tackle the underlying causes of homelessness	15. Encourage local employment for low-paid workers so that young people are able to stay in the districts for work (NB: Additional funding in place for the twelve months to June 2012)	Ongoing	SDC
	16. Extend the HERO model to offer advice on jobs, benefits and skills	HERO now also provides tenant accreditation	

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY TWO: MAXIMISING RESOURCES ACROSS WEST KENT (BECOMING MORE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE)**

***By 2016, our goal is to deliver a more effective service using fewer resources***

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>	<b>Lead/Key Partners</b>
To identify opportunities to share resources, services and expertise across the three authorities, and more widely	17. Identify options for sharing good practice and developing shared initiatives across the three authorities (or more widely)	Ongoing Current shared project is exploring possible crash pad provision for rough sleepers	HNMs
	18. Via the Kent Housing Options Group (KHOG), establish regular "good practice" sessions between the Housing Options Teams	Ongoing  All Kent LAs have committed to DCLG's Gold Standard Challenge	HNMs, KHOG
	19. Improve cross-borough reciprocal arrangements and referral procedures between authorities for urgent cases	KHOG County wide procedure now in place	HNMs, KHOG
To maximise the external resources available to tackle homelessness	20. Maximise the availability of benefits through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>early notification of changes to individuals' circumstances;</li> <li>access to a specialist Benefits Advisor to act as champion for residents;</li> <li>having effective procedures in place to maximise Discretionary Housing Payments within budget</li> <li>provision of in-house verification training for staff in benefits, customer services and housing needs Teams</li> </ul>	Ongoing  TMBC's options team have received Verification training from Housing Benefit Dept	HNMs/Housing Benefit Mangers

To make the best use of existing housing stock, in partnership with housing associations	21. Promoting under-occupation initiatives developed by RSL partners.	Ongoing SDC share a member of staff trained in welfare reform with WKHA. TWBC are planning a Mutual Exchange Fair to promote moves for people affected by the 'bedroom tax'. TMBC give priority to underoccupiers on some new developments via a local lettings plan	HNMs
	22. Improve the condition of the existing housing stock and bring back long term empty properties back into use	Ongoing  Empty properties back into use between 1.7.11 and 30.6.12: SDC (tbc), TMBC =7, TWBC = 20 Empty properties back into use between 1.7.12 and 30.6.13: SDC (tbc), TMBC = 12, TWBC =17	PSH Teams
	23. Raising awareness within Housing Options Teams of effects of displacement of families from London Boroughs. Reporting cases to KHOG for County wide monitoring	Ongoing	HNMs, KHOG
To maximise the availability of accommodation for people threatened with homelessness, both in the social and private rented sectors	24. Identify a partner to evaluate the provision of a direct access "crash pad" facility to manage crisis homelessness and allow "cooling off" space for young people	Ongoing  There have been some initial discussions with Look Ahead about this	HNMs

<b>STRATEGIC PRIORITY THREE: WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH PRIVATE SECTOR LANDLORDS</b>			
<b><i>By 2016, our goal is to understand and overcome the barriers to increased private sector lettings</i></b>			
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>	<b>Lead/Key Partners</b>
To work with private sector landlords in order to understand their priorities, perceived barriers to letting to tenants on benefits and to develop a "win-win" culture that offers reassurance to both parties	25. Establish a Steering Group with private sector landlords in order to understand their priorities, understand and overcome barriers and develop a "win-win" approach	Ongoing In 2012 TWBC held a useful steering group meeting with landlords	TMBC
	26. Develop and promote the West Kent Private Landlord Forum	Ongoing Landlords Fora held twice a year from 2013	PSH teams, Housing Options teams
	27. Develop a Landlord Information Pack	December 2013  Pack completed by TMBC and TWBC	HNMs
To develop a Tenancy Sustainment programme that will enable vulnerable residents maintain their tenancy	28. Explore the development of a tenancy sustainment package to support tenants to sustain their private sector letting	TWBC have 2 Tenancy Officers delivering tenancy sustainment	TWBC
To work with landlords to improve property standards in private sector homes through the Accreditation Schemes	29. Maximise participation in Landlord Accreditation Schemes	Ongoing TWBC operate PAL (Private Accredited Letting) Scheme - 20 properties have received a housing assistance loan to provide security and energy efficiency works over and above the Decent Homes standard for rented properties. 6 new landlords were accredited in 2011/12 and a further 6 in 2012/13	PSH teams

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY FOUR: CREATING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS TO TACKLE HOMELESSNESS**  
***By 2016, our goal is to strengthen existing partnerships, maximizing synergies to meet the needs of homeless people***

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>	<b>Lead/Key Partners</b>
To undertake a mapping exercise of homelessness organisations and services across West Kent, creating a shared, updatable resource	30. Undertake joint service mapping to identify role, client group(s), expertise and resources among all agencies working in homelessness in West Kent	Mapping exercise carried out by The Bridge Trust, who have produced the Survival Handbook. Kent wide mapping exercise carried out by Canterbury CC as part of discussions on how to spend DCLG funding	The Bridge Trust/Canterbury CC
To improve links with public sector bodies	31. Monitor existing Kent-wide protocols (e.g. mental health discharge, care leavers and prison discharge)	Ongoing.  This is carried out County wide by Joint Policy and Planning Board	JPPB
Increase the effectiveness and accountability of the Homelessness Strategy Group	32. Review the operation of HSG, increasing its accountability for delivery of the strategy and establish themed sub-groups with responsibility for delivering strategic priorities	December 2013	HNMs

<b>STRATEGIC PRIORITY FIVE: MEETING THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF HOMELESS PEOPLE</b>			
<b><i>By 2016, our goal is to understand and meet the needs of the diverse range of groups affected by homelessness</i></b>			
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>	<b>Lead/Key Partners</b>
To understand and meet the needs of young homeless people	33. Using the Kent-wide Young Person's Protocol, work with Children's Services departments to assist homeless 16/17 year olds	Ongoing Homeless approaches from 16/17 year old between 1.7.11 and 30.6.12 SDC (tbc) TMBC (tbc) TWBC - 5  Homeless approaches from 16/17 year old between 1.7.12 and 30.6.13 SDC (tbc) TMBC (tbc) TWBC - 3	HNMs, KCC WK Adolescent Support Team
	34. Signpost young people to literacy and numeracy classes where appropriate	Ongoing	
	35. Promote and support young people to access tenancy sustainment courses	Ongoing	
	36. Support the commissioning of supported accommodation for young people in Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks	Ongoing TMBC Young Person Scheme of 9 self-contained flats opened in June 2011	TWBC & SDC
To understand and meet the needs of people experiencing domestic violence	37. Where funding permits, extend the use of and promote the Sanctuary scheme to allow people experiencing domestic abuse to remain in their home	Ongoing TWBC assisted 1 person in 2011/12 and 1 person in 2012/2013 through the Sanctuary Scheme	HNMs
	38. Support the commissioning of refuges in Tonbridge & Malling and Sevenoaks	Ongoing SDC's refuge now open	TMBC
	39. Continue joint working with other agencies such as the Police through, for example, MARAC meetings	Ongoing	HNMs



To understand and meet the needs of homeless people with disabilities	40. Monitor temporary accommodation to continue to ensure there is provision to meet the needs of people with disabilities	Ongoing	HNMs
	41. With Private Sector Housing colleagues work with housing association partners to implement the Kent Housing Group standard for funding disabled adaptations in housing association stock	Ongoing	PSHMs/HNMs
To understand and meet the needs of people with complex needs, including mental health and substance misuse	42. Seek advice from health services and other specialists about the specific needs of this group and how best to engage with them; and provide appropriate training for staff (NB: May require additional resources)	Ongoing	HNMs
	43. Work more closely with KCC Adult Social Services and CRI and explore the possibility of joint assessments to identify the housing and support needs of this group	Ongoing	
To understand and meet the needs of the Gypsy & Traveller community	44. Work with the KCC Gypsy and Traveller Unit to better understand the housing and support needs of the gypsy and traveler community	Ongoing TMBC have increased no of plots at Coldharbour site to 26 In July 2013 TMBC commissioned GTAA Survey in consultation with Salford University	HNMs
To understand and meet the needs of older people	45. Signpost to FirstStop Advice so people over 50 can receive specialised housing advice	Ongoing FirstStop (EAC) reported the following contacts in 2012:  SDC – 52            TMBC – 67    TWBC - 37	HNMs

To understand and meet the needs of rough sleepers	46. Identify options for sourcing accommodation that can be used to support the Severe Weather Policies of each authority	<p>Ongoing Tunbridge Wells Winter Shelter has operated 2012 &amp; 2013 No of nights B+B provided for rough sleepers under SWEP (2011/12) SDC (tbc), TMBC – 9, TWBC – 36</p> <p>No of nights B+B provided for rough sleepers under SWEP (2012/13) SDC (tbc), TMBC – 21, TWBC – 40</p>	HNMs/Local homelessness agencies and voluntary organisations
To involve service users in shaping services	47. Develop a co-ordinated approach to service user consultation and involvement, including minority groups e.g. gypsies and travelers	Ongoing	HNMs