

**Thurrock Council**

**Homelessness Prevention Strategy**

**Action Plan**

**2015-20**

No	Key area	Objective	Action required	Outcome required	Measure of success	Completion By	Lead responsibility
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1	Housing Supply	Increase the supply of affordable housing in the borough	Influence future house building and planning to meet smaller household needs –i.e. studio, one and two bedroom properties	Reduction in the percentage of people waiting for 1 and 2 bedroom properties on the Housing Register	15% reduction in the waiting list for 1 and 2 bedroom properties	April 2020	Housing Allocations Manager
2			Influence future housing supply to include more affordable purchasing options such as shared ownership & help to buy	Increase in the number of Housing register applicants who are removed because they have purchased a property	0.5% of Housing Register applicants removed every year	April 2020	Housing Allocations Manager
3			Raise awareness of purchasing options & ensure all are considered as a prevention to homelessness when providing advice and assistance through the Housing Solutions service	All clients approaching the Housing Solutions team will receive information and advice on purchase options – target people via text messaging & social media	100% Housing Solutions team fully trained on purchasing options	April 2016	Housing Solutions Triage Managers
4			Ensure the Council makes good use of adapted properties via its Accessible Housing Register	Early maximisation of priority banding for potentially homeless applicants in need of adapted properties, even where they are not yet homeless within 28 days	No homeless applications taken from households who are in need of an adaptation	April 2016	Housing Allocations Manager

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5	Housing Supply	Increase the supply of supported housing in the borough	Research the provision and need for supported housing for specific groups of people – to include those with Autism, learning difficulties, mental health, complex and dual needs and the under 25s	Extensive report on housing needs through liaison with support groups and partner agencies	Sufficient information and evidence base to support the next stage	April 2016	Housing Strategy Team
6			Increased provision of supported housing in line with the research undertaken	Supported housing schemes built/identified/refurbished/designated to meet the needs identified in the research report	One new scheme developed every year	April 2020	Housing Strategy Team
7			Work with Adult Social Care to identify suitable accommodation and support services which meet REACH standards	Accommodation developed meets REACH standards and represents a joint working approach	All new schemes meet REACH standards	April 2020	Housing Strategy Team
8			Encourage a programme of move on from Supported accommodation to free up spaces	All eligible supported housing residents are on the Housing Register and are awarded the appropriate priority and encouraged to bid once ready for move on	Supported schemes have no more than two people waiting for supported accommodation at any time	April 2016	Housing Allocations Manager

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9	Housing Supply	Increase the supply of good quality private rented housing in Thurrock	Improve working relationships with private landlords and options for longer tenancies	Re-establish a working Landlord forum	Landlord forum meets twice per year	April 2016	Housing Solutions - Private Housing Team
10			Develop incentives for Thurrock landlords to take Thurrock homeless applicants as a discharge of duty or prevention – including pre-tenancy training, gas servicing and extensive monitoring of tenants to mirror introductory tenancies processes	Officers are using a variety of incentives to entice landlords to work with the Council	50% increase in the number of landlords offering properties to the Council year on year	April 2020	Housing Strategy Team
11			Develop offers for under occupying elderly home-owners to enable them to rent back their properties to the Housing solutions team	Package of options available for owners who are frail or elderly in return for long lease arrangements or home share	5 properties leased to the Council each year and 5 home share arrangements set up	April 2017	Housing Strategy Team
12			Joint working with environmental health and other enforcement agencies to ensure that landlords carry out their responsibilities to provide safe and sanitary conditions in order to prevent homelessness	Reduction in number of homeless approaches and priority bandings due to insanitary conditions	25% reduction in number of priorities awarded year on year due to insanitary conditions	April 2020	Private Housing Team

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13	Housing Supply	Improve cross boundary working and monitoring of placements within Thurrock to reduce adverse impacts on Thurrock services	Improve working relationships with London boroughs and set up information sharing agreements particularly regarding households with complex needs such as mental health, medical, specialist schooling and ASB issues	Protocol in place with London boroughs identified as placing people in Thurrock – including a data sharing agreement.	Reduction in the number of cases presenting to services in crisis where the resident is unknown to the service	April 2016	Housing Solutions Team
14			Monitor the impact of placements on services within the borough	Set up monthly reporting and monitoring of placements within the borough and share with partner agencies as appropriate	Monthly monitoring reports set up with partner agencies Detailed knowledge and understanding of the impact on services	April 2016	Housing Solutions Team
15	Education & mediation	Reduce number of parental evictions	Develop an education programme for teachers and assistants to enable them to teach pupils about homelessness and its implications and to promote staying at home where it is safe to do so	Annual conferences set up with school staff providing access to resources and knowledge updates	One school conference held in September each year with representation from every secondary school and college	September 2015	Housing Strategy Team
16			Reduce the number of parental evictions through use of mediation and floating support services and crash pads for periods of respite	Reduction in the number of homeless applications from young people under 25 evicted by family or friends	10% reduction year on year in number of homeless applications from under 25s	April 2016	Housing Solutions Team

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17	Finance	Improve knowledge & understanding of money management and budgeting skills	Improve access to debt advice and encourage its use	Recruitment of a dedicated housing & welfare advice officer within the Housing solutions team	Officer in post	September 2015	Strategic Lead Housing
18			Improve working partnerships with Housing benefits & agree fast tracking of claims for the housing solutions service where all documentation is provided	Reduction in NTQs and evictions for non-payment of rent where delay in HB payment is the cause	Zero evictions caused though non-payment of HB	April 2016	Housing & Welfare Advice Officer
19			Increase understanding of access to welfare benefits amongst staff and customers through regular training updates	All Housing solutions staff can give accurate advice to clients on how to claim appropriate benefits	All housing solutions staff receive training at least once per year	April 2016	Housing & Welfare Advice Officer
20			Offer programmes to Increase understanding of money management & budgeting skills within secondary schools & colleges	Include money management & budgeting skills in annual conference for skills with offer of ongoing training for individual schools	Annual schools conference in place	September 2015	Housing Strategy Team
21			Investigate the use of prevention funds for loans to clear debts and pay deposits in advance – set up processes for monitoring and recharging	Prevention funds identified and recharging processes agreed to enable continued use	20 Households per year prevented from eviction though the use of loans	April 2016	Housing Solutions – Private Housing Team

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22	Tenancy Sustainment	Improve Tenancy sustainment across all tenures	Monitor Council evictions of Introductory and secure tenancies to determine appropriate levels of support and monitoring	Support provided in a timely manner to tenants in need	Decrease of 20% in Council evictions of secure and introductory tenancies year on year	April 2020	Thurrock Council Rents Manager
23			Investigate options for increased floating support across all tenures – offer as part of the incentive to private landlords	Business case for Senior management outlining floating support requirements – in preparation for procurement of service for 2016 onwards	Appropriate levels of support in place so that tenants wait no longer than one week for an assessment	September 2015	Housing Strategy Team
24			Increase awareness of the implications of eviction amongst tenants of all tenures	Production of a DVD outlining what can happen when a family are made homeless – “busting the myths” DVD sent to all failing Council tenants and new tenants at Sign Up – including private tenants assisted by the Council	Increased awareness amongst tenants – evidenced through floating support agencies (base lines to be agreed)	April 2017	Housing Strategy Team
25			Consider options for pre-tenancy training for potential tenants across all tenures	A package of mandatory pre-tenancy training available across tenures in a number of formats e.g. DVD / on line learning / classroom learning	Decrease of 10% year on year in evictions from all tenancy types due to tenancy breaches	April 2020	Housing Strategy Team

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24	Domestic abuse & sexual violence	Appropriate emergency and ongoing housing and support available	Increase access to specialised refuge spaces for people with complex needs such as drug, alcohol, mental health issues and complex needs and those with no recourse to public funds	Increase usage of the UK Gold online refuge service to enable links with specialist services	Appropriate refuge space to meet specific support needs of clients is found - in 100% of cases	April 2016	Housing Domestic Abuse Team
25			Research options for safe houses within Council stock including options for a Crash Pad facility for short term needs and move on accommodation from the refuge	Business case detailing requirements to senior managers with recommendations	Appropriate accommodation available to meet the needs of clients where refuge is not a suitable option - in 100% of cases	April 2017	Housing Domestic Abuse Team
26			Promote the sanctuary scheme as an alternative to moving home across all tenures	Increased awareness of how the Sanctuary Scheme works amongst staff, agencies and clients – through use of literature, schools, advertising etc.	Increase of 20% in the number of Sanctuary Schemes used year on year to prevent a homeless application being made	April 2020	Housing Domestic Abuse Team
27			Increase awareness of services available to support clients with a variety of support needs	Increased use of Lead professionals to set up joint meetings involving partner agencies and support groups	Appropriate support is provided to clients in 95% of cases – evidenced through survey following episodes of involvement with the Housing department	April 2016	Housing Domestic Abuse Team



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28	Domestic abuse & sexual violence	Increase awareness of and appropriate responses to suspected and actual cases of domestic abuse and sexual violence	Increase training and awareness of sexual and domestic abuse for all housing staff	All Housing staff attend mandatory training on Domestic abuse and sexual violence and undertake the new process training	100% attendance at training by all Housing frontline staff every 3 years – monitoring programme in place	April 2016	Housing Strategy Team
29			Improve working relationships between professionals – including Council (all directorates) and partner agencies	<p>Opportunities made available to shadow Domestic Abuse officers and/or partner agency staff</p> <p>Open days, conferences etc. highlighted to Housing and other partner agencies</p> <p>Partners to be invited to team meetings and events</p>	<p>At least 5 people per year undertake a shadowing opportunity</p> <p>At least 5 teams per year invite partners to team meetings</p>	April 2020	Housing Strategy Team
30			Agree a working protocol with Domestic abuse support agencies with an agreed sharing data protocol. Protocol to include simplified flowchart for quick reference	All Housing staff have access to and regularly refer to the working protocol	Protocol completed and regularly updated; access given to all housing staff	April 2016	Housing Strategy Team

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31	Partnership working	Develop agreed housing pathways	Develop SLAs and working protocols between Housing solutions and partner agencies - to include a robust hospital discharge policy for both mental health and physical health	Working protocols in use by all staff and regularly updated	Zero emergency presentations of homeless applicants because of a hospital or prison discharge	April 2016	Housing Strategy Team
32			Explore options and consult with partners on a "Housing First" approach to include improved support provision by supporting agencies and partners	Business case presented to senior management with recommendations for future programme	Housing first approach in place with working agreements for support from partner services and agencies	April 2017	Housing Strategy Team
33			Homelessness forum to be set up to drive forward the action plan with identified leads for specific areas - leading on actions with regular updates	Quarterly homelessness forum in place for sharing information, training & developing links with the Housing solutions	Action Plan is a living document with identified objectives and successful outcomes	April 2016	Housing Strategy Team
34			Increase the use of case reviews at the earliest stage of threatened homelessness for complex cases and for identifying vulnerable people sooner	Increased number of, and confidence in, multi-agency case reviews with agreed outcomes and defined actions	100% of complex cases have an identified pathway into housing	April 2016	Housing Triage Managers

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35	Partnership working	Adopt a corporate commitment to preventing homelessness	Provision of regular opportunities for joint working, shadowing and training across the Council and with partner Agencies	Agreed programme in place allowing opportunities for shadowing and training	At least 5 shadowing opportunities are completed every year  At least 2 joint training events completed every year	April 2016	Housing Strategy Team
36			Increase the knowledge of members around homelessness prevention and the advice they can provide to constituents	Regular Members training sessions provided	All members attend a training session at least once every two years	April 2016	Housing Triage Managers
37			Work in partnership with the Job Centre to maximise job opportunities for customer	Housing options advice incorporates signposting to employment and training advice	Increase by 0.5% in number of applicants on Housing waiting lists who qualify for working household properties	April 2019	Housing Welfare Officer
38			Tackle under occupation across all tenure types but in particular social housing tenants unaffected by the bedroom under-occupation reforms	Incentive schemes in operation for all tenures to reduce under-occupation	Reduction in under occupation across the borough	April 2020	Housing Strategy Team

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39	Strategic planning	Improve monitoring to enable the highest standards of future strategic planning	Continue to monitor equality strands against local and national trends to ensure no specific equality group is being adversely impacted	Quarterly monitoring reports produced and presented as part of the annual strategy review	No evidence of adverse impacts identified	Ongoing	Homelessness Forum
40			Ensure statistics collected are more detailed and consistent to enable a better understanding and assist with forward planning including the collection of data around homeless applicants with supported housing needs	A comprehensive set of data with consistent written definitions is identified; the new Housing IT systems is programmed to capture the appropriate data and staff are fully trained in how to input the data accurately	Accurate comprehensive set of statistics is available quickly and easily, that managers are confident reflects the current housing climate	April 2016	Performance Manager
41		Decrease use of B & B	Ensure there is sufficient provision of adapted temporary accommodation	Review of temporary accommodation completed to identify availability of adapted accommodation against anticipated need	Zero number of incidents when adapted accommodation is not available when required	April 2016	Temporary Accommodation Manager
42			Eliminate the use of B & B for all customers except in an emergency and then for a minimal period; Ensure no 16 & 17 years are placed in B & B accommodation	Sufficient temporary accommodation is available within the borough to meet needs as required	Zero use of B & B except exceptionally in an emergency	April 2016	Temporary Accommodation Manager
43		Review priority banding	Consider impact of priority bandings for statutory homeless and those who are homeless at home and options for improving priority to non- statutory homeless groups	Research paper produced which outlines all impacts and enables senior managers to make recommendations for the Housing Allocations Scheme review	Decisions made with highest level of information available	April 2017	Housing Strategy Team

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44	No Second Night Out	Increased options for rough sleepers	Increase emergency provision and self-referral options – HMOs, hostels etc.	Direct access available to suitable emergency accommodation for rough sleepers	100% of rough sleepers can access accommodation within 24 hours	April 2017	Housing Strategy Team
45			Effective system in place for forming an assessment of rough sleepers within 72 hours of identification, including those with no local connection/entitlement	All rough Sleepers taken to a safe place, their needs assessed and given housing options advice	100% of identified rough sleepers are assessed within 72 hours of identification and	April 2016	Reconnection worker
46			Reconnection protocol in place which includes access to funding for documents and travel - includes support to prevent a return to rough sleeping	Offers of reconnection are made where possible and appropriate	100% of customers are reconnected where this is identified as a viable option	April 2016	Reconnection worker
47			Ensure that data around rough sleepers is accurate	Carry out a formal rough sleeper count every year	Formal count completed every year	Ongoing	Housing Strategy Team

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48	Customer services	Communication	Improve effective communications between officers and customers – both verbally and written including adequate means of communications for Non-English speakers and those with sight and hearing impairments	Improved delivery of advice ensuring accuracy and relevance and written advice is always provided in a language which the customer can understand	Improved satisfaction levels amongst service users	April 2016	Housing Triage Managers
49			Investigate the option of a one stop shop for all housing options either within the Civic offices or in another location	Business case for senior managers to consider options and decide on best pathway	Business case informs senior management decision	April 2016	Housing Strategy Team
50			Improve the online housing advice tool to incorporate better options advice, signposting to employment and other services and to manage customer expectations better	The online advice tool provides sufficient information to allow customers to access all services required themselves and to fully understand any processes and next steps	50% reduction in appointments with Housing solutions staff	April 2019	Housing Strategy Team