

**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	Increase in % of smaller properties built each year	April 2020	Housing Investment & Development Team
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	Increase in number of applicants on Housing register taking up shared ownership & other purchasing options	April 2020	Housing Investment & Development Team
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	Homeless Triage and Housing Allocations 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	Implement a process for fast tracking homeless applicants who are in need of an adaptation	November 2015	Homeless Triage and Housing Allocations Managers

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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			Work with Adult Social Care to increase the provision of supported housing in line with the research undertaken - to include private options and empty homes	Supported housing schemes built/identified/refurbished/designated to meet the needs identified in the research report Accommodation developed meets REACH standards and represents a joint working approach	Ongoing development plan All new schemes meet REACH standards	April 2020	Housing Strategy Team
7			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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8	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
9			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	20% increase in the number of landlords offering properties to the Council year on year	April 2020	Housing Strategy Team
10			Tackle under occupation across all tenure types including social housing tenants unaffected by the bedroom under- occupation reform and elderly home-owners	Incentive schemes in operation for all tenures to reduce under-occupation including options available for elderly owner occupiers to lease back properties to the Council	Reduction in under occupation across the borough	April 2017	Housing Strategy Team
11			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	Reduction in the number of priorities awarded year on year due to insanitary conditions	April 2020	Private Housing Team

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12	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.	Year on year reduction in the number of cases presenting to services in crisis where the resident is unknown to the service	April 2016	Housing Solutions Team
13			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 and Housing Quality Team
14	Education & Mediation	Reduce number of parental evictions	Develop an education programme for school staff to enable them to teach pupils about homelessness and its implications and to promote staying at home	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 in the borough	September 2015	Housing Strategy Team
15			Reduce the number of parental evictions through use of mediation and floating support services and crash pads for periods of respite for 16 to 25 year olds	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 Mediation service extended to 18 to 21 year olds	April 2016	Housing Solutions & Housing strategy Team

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16	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
17			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
18			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
19			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
20		Prevent mortgage repossessions	Build expertise amongst staff and partners to enable negotiation with mortgage providers in order to prevent mortgage repossessions	Staff actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions	Reduction in homeless application taken due to mortgage repossession	April 2017	Housing Solutions Team

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21	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 in Council evictions of secure and introductory tenancies year on year	April 2020	Thurrock Council Rents and Estates Management Managers
22			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
23			Develop mandatory pre-tenancy training for potential Council tenants and across all tenures where the Council introduces the tenant to a landlord. 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 all new tenants at Sign Up – including private tenants assisted by the Council A package of mandatory pre-tenancy training available across tenures in a number of formats e.g. DVD / on line learning / classroom learning	Increased awareness amongst tenants – evidenced through floating support agencies (base lines to be agreed) Decrease of 10% year on year in evictions from all tenancy types due to tenancy breaches	April 2017	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 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	Increase usage of the UK Gold online refuge service to enable links with specialist services Business case detailing requirements to senior managers with recommendations	Appropriate accommodation available to meet all client's needs (including support needs) in 100% of cases	April 2017	Housing Safeguarding Team
25			Promote the sanctuary scheme as an alternative to moving home across all tenures and increase awareness of services available to support clients with a variety of support needs	Increased awareness of how the Sanctuary Scheme works amongst staff, agencies and clients – through use of literature, schools, advertising etc. Increased use of Lead professionals to set up joint meetings involving partner agencies and support groups	Increase of 20% in the number of Sanctuary Schemes used year on year to prevent a homeless application being made Appropriate support is provided to clients in 95% of cases – evidenced through survey following episodes of involvement with the Housing department	April 2020	Housing Safeguarding Team



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26	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
27			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
28			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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29	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	Reduction in emergency presentations of homeless applicants because of a hospital or prison discharge	April 2016	Housing Strategy Team
30			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
31			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  Ongoing monitoring of outcomes with clearly defined baselines	Action Plan is a living document with identified objectives and successful outcomes	April 2016	Housing Strategy Team

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32	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
33			Increase the knowledge of members around homelessness prevention and the advice they can provide to constituents	Regular Members training sessions provided	All members offered a training session at least once every two years	April 2016	Housing Triage Managers
34		Work in partnership with the DWP to maximise job opportunities for customer	Housing options advice incorporates signposting to employment and training advice	Increase in number of applicants on Housing waiting lists who are referred to DWP	April 2019	Housing Welfare Officer	
35		Adopt a corporate commitment to supporting homeless households	Improve communication between Housing solutions staff and health professionals to enable links between health professionals and those in temporary accommodation	Systems set up to communicate details to health care professionals as appropriate	All families and vulnerable people in temporary accommodation have the opportunity to link up to health visitors, GPs, support services etc.	April 2016	Housing Triage Managers

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36	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
37			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
38		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
39			Eliminate the use of B & B for all customers except in an emergency and then for a minimal period;	Sufficient temporary accommodation is available within the borough to meet needs as required	Use of B & B only in an emergency No 16 & 17 years are placed in B & B accommodation or families for more than 6 weeks	April 2016	Temporary Accommodation Manager

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40		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
41	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
42			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	25% reduction in appointments with Housing solutions staff year on year	April 2019	Housing Strategy Team

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43	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
44			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
45			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
46			Ensure that data around rough sleepers is accurate	Carry out a formal rough sleeper count every 2 years and an informed estimate on alternate years with the assistance of agencies and partners	Formal count completed every 2 <sup>nd</sup> year	Ongoing	Housing Strategy Team