

Name of service or policy	Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2015-20
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Why is this service or policy development/review needed?
<p>The number of households approaching Thurrock Council as homeless or potentially homeless has almost trebled in the past three years - from 1009 in 2012-13 up to 2670 in 2014-15.</p> <p>The Homelessness Act 2002 requires a Local Authority to review homelessness in its area at least every five years and to produce a strategy to prevent homelessness and to provide accommodation for those who are homeless or likely to become so.</p> <p>The last review was carried out in 2010 – a further review has now been completed.</p> <p>The review identified areas where homelessness is most prevalent and in particular the four main causes of homelessness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eviction by parents, family or friends • The ending of an Assured Short hold tenancy • Violence or harassment • Mortgage or rent arrears. <p>It also identified the need for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an increase in the supply of housing within the borough • better education around the reasons for homelessness and how to prevent it • increased support to help tenants sustain their tenancy – particularly around debt advice and money management <p>A strategy action plan has been identified with the emphasis on preventing homeless at an earlier stage and thereby reducing the need to make a homeless application and for temporary accommodation.</p> <p>This action plan will identify areas of work over a five year period but it will be regularly reviewed by a multi-agency homelessness forum and will report back to Members annually with updates</p>

The impact of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy on the Community and on groups with “protected characteristics”		
	Impact of homelessness on the group	Actions taken to minimise the negative impact
Local communities	<p>Homelessness affects people from across all communities and it is well established that being homeless has a negative impact in terms of mental and physical health, future development and education.</p> <p>The use of temporary accommodation can be particularly detrimental and unsettling because of the need to move into areas and communities that are unknown to the household – this can impact education and the ability to settle down into a sustainable way of life – particularly for children and young people</p> <p>It also impacts health needs – for example being able to cook healthy and nutritious food with limited facilities or linking in with appropriate health care professionals</p>	<p>The strategy is a prevention tool with actions to prevent people from falling into homeless situations in the first place</p> <p>It identifies the causes of homelessness and promotes actions for dealing with these at an early stage to lessen the detrimental impacts</p> <p>The strategy also identifies ways of managing the needs of those who come into temporary accommodation</p>
Age	<p>The homelessness review identified that the majority (83%) of homeless households where a rehousing duty is accepted were aged below 44 years</p> <p>35% were aged between 16 and 24 years.</p> <p>The biggest cause of homelessness was eviction by a family member, relative or friend and this is also most likely to be seen with younger people who are</p>	<p>The strategy emphasises the need to prevent homelessness particularly in younger people and identifies the following specific actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educating young people whilst at school / college to understand the implications of becoming homeless and to educate on ways in which they can prevent this from happening • Providing a mediation

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	<p>seeking their first home.</p> <p>Where young people are homeless they are at risk of other kinds of harms such as physical, mental and financial abuse. Their immaturity means they do not easily cope with the responsibilities of money and housing management</p> <p>It is clear that the best option for young people is to remain in the family home provided it is safe to do so</p>	<p>service for young people under 25 and their evictors to help keep young people at home where it is safe to do so</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying the need for respite/short term emergency accommodation such as a crash pad to alleviate relationship difficulties and to enable mediation to take place • Reviewing the allocations policy to consider options for giving higher priority for Council housing where families keep older children and relatives within the family home for longer
<p>Disability</p>	<p>The 2nd highest priority need group – after households with dependent children - was those with mental health problems.</p> <p>These tend to be single people who are usually placed into bed & breakfast for a temporary period.</p> <p>The accommodation may be within their usual area of residence but is likely not to be so since the Council has to accommodate using whatever resources are available at the time.</p> <p>Placements outside of the borough are also possible but only where no local placement can be found – such placements have a detrimental effect on those with mental health problems since they remove them from areas of support, and in particular, out of the reach of mental health professionals who tend to be area</p>	<p>The strategy recognises the need to keep temporary accommodation to a minimum and to provide support wherever possible.</p> <p>A new single person hostel has been opened in Clarence Road in Grays within walking distance of the Grays Hall mental health unit.</p> <p>The hostel provides onsite support through Family Mosaic support workers who will encourage residents to stay connected to health professionals, attend appointment etc.</p> <p>For the physically disabled there is some adapted temporary accommodation but the action plan recognises the need to provide more if required and also that people need to link in with support and health care professionals</p>

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	<p>based – leaving the homeless person isolated and unsupported</p> <p>Temporary accommodation for those with physical disabilities was also recognised</p>	
Gender re-assignment	<p>Gender data is captured by the Council for national statistics but is based only on male / female definitions and does not capture reassignment.</p> <p>Therefore it is difficult to determine whether there has been any adverse impact on this equality group above that of any other homeless person</p>	<p>One of the actions from the strategy is the improved collection of many areas of data and gender reassignment will be one of these areas so that research into the needs of specific groups can be undertaken – this will be picked up through the new homelessness forum</p>
Marriage and Civil partnership	<p>49% of homeless households where a rehousing duty was accepted were single parents and a further 29% were single households.</p> <p>Married couples and those in a civil partnership represented less than 22% indicating that this is not a group highly impacted by homelessness</p>	<p>One of the actions from the strategy is the improved collection of many areas of data and marriage and civil partnership will be one of these areas so that research into the needs of specific groups can be undertaken – this will be picked up through the new homelessness forum</p>
Pregnancy & maternity	<p>7% of homeless households where a rehousing duty was accepted had a member of the household who was pregnant.</p> <p>Being placed into temporary accommodation whilst pregnant can be detrimental because of the need to link in with medical practitioners such as midwives and health visitors. It can be difficult to register with GPs without a permanent address. This can prove stressful for pregnant mothers and could result in them not receiving the help and</p>	<p>The strategy specifically identifies the need to eliminate the use of B & B accommodation by providing alternative longer term accommodation for every age group and household make up.</p> <p>In particular B & B accommodation will not be used for families and young people under 18.</p> <p>Improved working partnership will mean linking families in with appropriate health visitors and GPs etc. when they are placed into temporary accommodation</p>

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	<p>advice required to ensure a safe delivery of their baby</p>	
Ethnicity	<p>Numbers of homeless households in Thurrock broadly reflected the population.</p> <p>BME groups represented around 20% of the total number of households where a rehousing duty was accepted. 80% were white.</p> <p>National statistics show that around 19% of Thurrock residents represent BME groups whilst 81% were white</p> <p>Black or Black British represent the 2nd largest population group in Thurrock at 7.8%</p> <p>The number of homeless Black or Black British was slightly higher than the Thurrock population at 11%</p> <p>Other BME groups generally reflected the local population percentages</p> <p>There does not appear to be an obvious detrimental impact on any particular ethnic group</p>	<p>Homelessness is detrimental to all communities, but one of the action points from the action plan is to continually monitor equality strands against local and national trends to ensure that no specific group is over represented and thereby being adversely impacted.</p> <p>This will be taken forward through the homelessness forum which will be a multi-agency group</p>
Gender	<p>At least 76% of homeless households with a rehousing duty had a female head of the household – either single or as part of a couple.</p> <p>This compares to 38% for males, indicating that females are twice as likely to be homeless than males – however these statistics only take account of households where a duty is accepted and since pregnancy and dependent children represent the highest</p>	<p>The action plan identifies the need for more refuge and safe house accommodation for all needs and in particular for those with complex needs.</p> <p>This means identifying safe accommodation other than the traditional refuge style i.e. for male victims and for those with older male children.</p> <p>The strategy plan also identifies the need for self-referral hostels</p>

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	<p>priority need group, this statistic is not surprising.</p> <p>Domestic abuse, although affecting all genders, is still more likely to be against a woman and represents one of the 4 highest causes of homelessness at 17%.</p> <p>Where victims of abuse have older male children it can be difficult to accommodate them in a refuge since most will not take boys above 10 or 11 years of age.</p> <p>Where male domestic abuse is present refuge and safe accommodation is also much harder to find</p> <p>The Council identified a number of rough sleepers within the borough and clearly rough sleeping can be more dangerous for women with greater safety risks.</p>	<p>and the continuing support of the St Mungo's outreach and reconnection work for rough sleepers.</p>
<p>Sexual Orientation</p>	<p>Sexual orientation data is not captured by the Council for national statistics.</p> <p>Therefore it is difficult to determine any adverse impact on this equality group</p>	<p>One of the actions from the strategy is the improved collection of many areas of data and sexual orientation will be one of these areas</p> <p>This will be undertaken by the new homelessness forum</p>

Next steps

Implications/ Customer Impact

Detailed research and consultation was undertaken to inform the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan. This is outlined in the Thurrock Homelessness Review document and this has been presented to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Strategy will be presented to Cabinet for adoption on 14th October 2015.

If adopted the Council can move forward with the actions identified within the plan and will immediately set up a multi-agency homelessness forum

Sign off

The information contained in this template should be authorised by the relevant project sponsor or Head of Service who will be responsible for the accuracy of the information now provided and delivery of actions detailed.

Name	Role (e.g. project sponsor, head of service)	Date
Dermot Moloney	Strategic Lead Housing	10/08/15