

North Somerset Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2017-22



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Foreword

Since our last homelessness strategy we have achieved a great deal to improve our partnership and multi-agency approach to preventing and tackling homeless across North Somerset. But there is more to do, and given the steady increase across all indicators of demand, reduced council resources, the uncertain impact of major welfare reforms, and other increasing pressures on local services we must have a clear prevention strategy for the future. This document is forward-looking and ambitious, and will ensure we continue to engage with all those partners and stakeholders who can be part of a strategic response to homelessness and its' associated issues.

It is a time of major change for national housing policy and with the new Homelessness Reduction Act recently enacted we must embrace the new challenges and responsibilities this brings. It is crucial we have a strategy that ensures North Somerset can effectively respond to homelessness. An effective response to homelessness is also essential to empower people to contribute to their community, to enable young people to fulfil their ambitions and support families to give their children the best start in life. We have a prevention and early intervention approach and for the first time we have called our new strategy our Preventing Homelessness Strategy to emphasise this.

This Preventing Homelessness Strategy and its supporting document the Homelessness Review identify and examine the issues we face and show how we will work to address them. We have organised the new strategy under three themes: supply, support and prevention. Supply – illustrates how we work with partners to improve the existing accommodation solutions for homeless people, and add new supply which responds to their short and long-term needs. Support – is about regularly reviewing and improving the range of support services¹ that sustain independent living for the often vulnerable households we work with. Prevention – doing our utmost to keep households in their current home, and where this is not possible to achieve a planned move to new housing to avoid the stress and cost of homelessness

The whole council will continue to work with a range of partners to achieve the actions in the strategy to enable positive outcomes and a better quality of life for those residents of North Somerset experiencing the threat of homelessness.

Clr Elfan Ap Rees

Executive Member for Strategic Planning, Highways, Economic Development and Housing and Deputy Leader of the Council

¹ Supported housing and 'floating support'

1. Introduction

Purpose of this Strategy

The purpose of the Preventing Homelessness Strategy (PHS) is to set out our strategic direction, specific priorities and actions to prevent and tackle homelessness in the North Somerset (NS) area for the next five years.

Link to the Homelessness Review

The PHS is informed by evidence from the Homelessness Review (HMR) undertaken mainly in 2016. The HMR is a longer, more detailed document than this PHS and pulls together information we (or partners) hold about homelessness and relevant, related areas of activity and services. For a list of the key partner agencies we work with to prevent homelessness and teams from within the council that are involved, see Appendix 2 of the HMR. This includes information gathered from consultation with housing advice staff, the Housing and Homelessness Prevention Forum (HHPF) (a network of external to the council homelessness service providers) and other stakeholders. If you are reading this on line you can link to the HMR, an executive summary of this PHS and other housing documents through this link – <http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-council/policies/people-communitites-housing/>.

The HMR also included a description of resources involved in combatting homelessness in North Somerset, including the role of various partners directly providing services (e.g. advice, accommodation, engagement etc.) to homeless households in our area.

Three key themes for clustering together our service development and actions in this PHS emerged from the HMR as set out below:

- Supply – work with partners to improve existing and develop/innovate new accommodation solutions to meet the need of homeless people
- Support – provide a range of support services that sustain independent living and reduce or avoid the risk of households becoming homeless
- Prevention – act to prevent homelessness and help sustain independent living by enabling household to remain in their current home or achieve a planned move to new housing

The actions we propose to implement in response are grouped under these themes. A summary of the actions is set out below with full details at Appendix 1. The rationale for the actions is set out in Section 6.

SUPPLY

- Reduce stays in temporary accommodation (TA)
- Develop shared housing
- Increase supply of affordable private rented sector (PRS) housing
- Stretch TA budget by recovering bed and breakfast (B&B) charges
- Mitigate adverse housing effects of Hinkley Point¹
- Investigate property guardianship²
- Explore idea of an ethical lettings agency

SUPPORT

- Ensure new support contracts better meet needs of homeless people
- Partner with Family Support to assist young people
- Set up panel to assist those with complex needs
- Mitigate adverse effects of welfare reform
- Explore potential of rough sleeper assessment centre
- Deliver housing actions arising from the Housing with Support Strategy

PREVENTION

- Improve hospital discharge
- Establish strategic partnership for rough sleepers / single homeless people / begging
- Meet our Homelessness Reduction Act obligations
- Promote Streetlink for rough sleeper referrals
- Partner with children's centres for families
- Partner with 'Edge of Care'³ to access services to prevent and reduce homelessness
- Further develop services for care leavers
- Work towards achieving the Government's Gold Standard

The PHS recognises that the varied circumstances of homelessness cannot be tackled by one agency or service alone. We regularly review the way in which we deliver services to prevent and tackle homelessness both directly and in partnership. We will continue to strengthen and improve multi-agency responses and engagement with a wide array of partner agencies.

Whilst we have tried to avoid jargon and have provided explanations of terms and abbreviations the first time they have been used we've also provided a Glossary at Appendix 2.

- 1 The new nuclear power station at Hinkley Point will put greater strain on PRS housing in North Somerset
- 2 Property guardianship allows potentially homeless households to live in empty, commercial premises
- 3 Edge of Care is a programme to safely prevent and reduce the no. of children and young people entering care; ensure they are protected from significant harm, and their development and wellbeing are promoted

2. Links to other North Somerset Plans and Strategies

This section outlines how the PHS aligns with a number of other key North Somerset plans and strategies. The PHS is one of a number of delivery plans which support our Housing Strategy and in turn our Corporate Plan. These delivery plans and a number of other North Somerset policies and strategies are listed in Appendix 4 of the PHS.

Corporate Plan

In our Corporate Plan the council sets out its clear vision for North Somerset:

“A great place to live where people, businesses and communities flourish. Modern, efficient services and a strong voice for North Somerset”

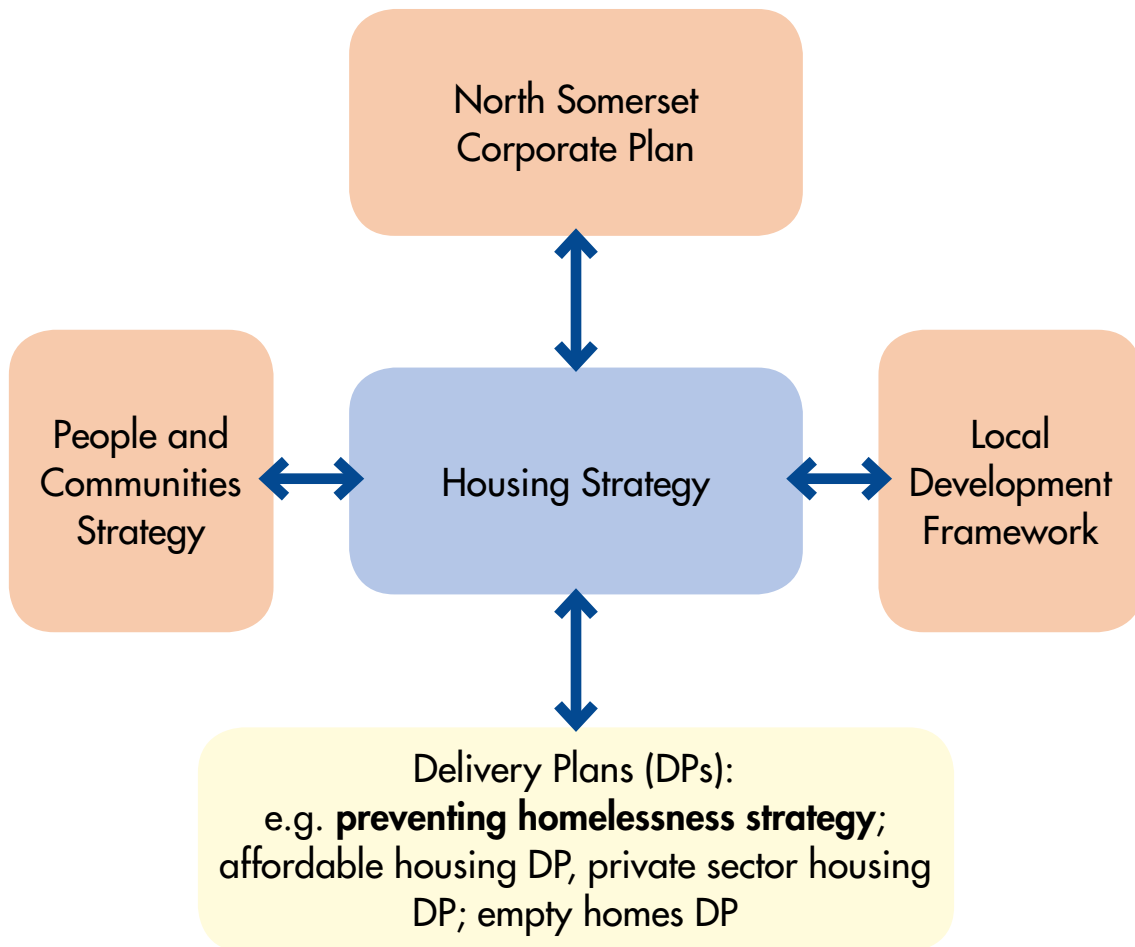
The Corporate Plan identifies three key outcomes which the council wants to achieve for local people: Prosperity and Opportunity, Health and Wellbeing and Quality Places.

Under each of these outcomes, specific ambitions have been identified, together with four cross-organisational ‘enablers’, which are the characteristics the organisation will need to deliver its ambitions:

Prosperity and Opportunity	Health and Wellbeing	Quality Places
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drive growth in the North Somerset economy and local jobs• Ensure that all our town centres are thriving• Enable young people to fulfil their potential• Ensure that all our communities share in prosperity and employment growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enable residents to make healthy choices and promote active lifestyles which reduce ill-health and increase independence• Support families to give their children the best start in life• Commission or provide quality health and care services, which deliver dignity, safety and choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enable sustainable housing growth which protects our natural and built environment and the special character of our villages• Build and sustain great places to live and visit – vibrant, accessible, and safe• Empower people to contribute to their community and communities to provide their own solutions

◁ Cross Cutting Enablers ▷

- A transformed council: modern, innovative and accessible
- Skilled and motivated staff, passionate about making North Somerset even better
- Excellence in resource management
- Strong, outcomes focused partnerships



The diagram above shows how our Housing Strategy and this PHS support the delivery of the Corporate Plan. The diagram overleaf shows how the PHS links to the council's Housing Strategy Aims and Corporate Plan outcomes.

PHS Themes		Housing Strategy Aims		Corporate Plan Outcomes
Supply – improved and new accommodation solutions	links to	Increasing the supply of homes	links to	Quality Places
Support – sustain independent living / reduce risk of homelessness		Improving homes		Health and Wellbeing
Prevention – prevent homelessness by enabling households to remain in their home or achieve planned move		Providing housing solutions		Prosperity and Opportunity

There are links between the PHS and all 10 ambitions of the Corporate Plan and a number of the projects the council is implementing to deliver the Corporate Plan. The table below highlights some examples.

Corporate Plan ambition	Relevance of Homelessness	PHS Response
Prosperity and Opportunity – Enable young people to fulfil their ambition	Nationally it is recognised that care leavers can be at greater risk of homelessness. In 2015/16, in NS 10 young people (YP) formerly in care aged 18-20 were accepted as homeless; 11% of all homelessness acceptances.	The council has a corporate parenting duty towards YP who have been in care. At least six of the actions in our PHS action plan will particularly benefit YP including the development of a bespoke action plan for care leavers. We tie in our efforts to assist care leavers with the range of services which are part of the NS Local Offer, provided through the council care leavers services, which is regularly reviewed and improved.
Health and Wellbeing – Support families to give their children the best start in life	50% of those households accepted as homeless are families with children or with a pregnancy.	The action plan sets out a number of actions to help prevent homelessness and minimise the time homeless families spend living in temporary accommodation. The homelessness service will work in partnership with the new intensive family preservation service to reduce the need for children to be in care (social impact bond).

Corporate Plan ambition	Relevance of Homelessness	PHS Response
<p>Quality Places – Ensure that our town centres are thriving</p>	<p>Thriving town centres support a buoyant housing market.</p> <p>Rough sleeping and begging is often associated with town centres.</p>	<p>Regeneration of Weston town centre will enable the development of additional homes. Some institutional investors are interested in building homes to rent which may benefit those in acute housing need (including homeless people) and an increase in supply may in turn release more accommodation in the private rented sector for homeless people.</p> <p>The proactive approach to rough sleeping and work with our partners to help address begging set out in the PHS, will help reduce homelessness and will support the regeneration of Weston town centre.</p>
<p>Quality Places – Empower people to contribute to their community and communities to provide their own solutions</p>	<p>The majority of those households we help to overcome homelessness are vulnerable in some way. Without the 'platform' of secure housing it would be hard for them to contribute.</p>	<p>The advice, support and engagement services of the council and partners all aim to enable clients to become more independent and resilient if possible. Most of the partner agencies we work with have strong roots in NS communities.</p> <p>The PHS action plan includes reviewing a range of support and services provided, to ensure they continue to meet the diverse needs of homeless and potentially homeless households</p>

Housing Strategy

Our Housing Strategy, which was approved early in 2016, has the following ambitions relating to preventing homelessness and meeting housing need:

- Improving housing options for vulnerable households and people with support needs by continuing to research and develop the evidence base for supported housing
- Working in partnership to tackle and prevent homelessness by reviewing, developing and implementing a new Homelessness Strategy
- Ensuring the provision of adequate accommodation for homeless people by reviewing temporary and emergency accommodation needs

One of the actions from the Housing Strategy is to review, develop and implement this new Preventing Homelessness Strategy. This emphasises our commitment and approach, which is to intervene as early as possible to deal with potential homelessness, because we recognise the negative effects homelessness can have on people's health (including mental health needs), wellbeing and life chances (e.g. unemployment and drug/alcohol misuse).

Housing with Support Strategy (HWSS)

The council's People and Communities Strategy Team are leading on a new strategy which seeks to predict future demand for housing with support from:

- Older people
- People with learning difficulties
- People with mental health needs,
- People with physical and sensory impairment and
- Young people

This strategy will cover all tenures, long and short-term accommodation, and will seek to identify and then address gaps in services. Information from this strategy will help to ensure provision best meets needs and enables the council and partners to plan for more independent living options and away from more institutionalised settings. The HWSS will give us better information around the housing needs of vulnerable groups to improve services for them. Later in this PHS we explain which vulnerable groups are especially affected by homelessness. The PHS will be aligned with this HWSS when it is developed.

Equality and diversity

To make sure our services reflect the needs of the community we carry out a programme of equality impact assessments on all strategies, policies, plans and services to identify their potential impact on our residents and staff. The equality impact assessment for this PHS is available as a separate document.

3. Key achievements from the last Homelessness Strategy

- Successful bid to regional Rough Sleeper Fund to support provision of rough sleeping prevention services
- Successful bid for single person homelessness funding with partner local authorities (LAs)
- Council services improved as result of mystery shopping
- Consolidating, developing and continuing multi-agency¹ work around:
 - domestic violence; child exploitation; mental health; 16/17 year olds; hospital discharge; anti-social behaviour (ASB); rough sleeping; and physical and sensory impairment
- Minimised the number of 16/17 year olds that had to be taken into LA care by developing workable housing solutions and through joint work with Children's Support and Safeguarding service;
- New improved joint protocol with Children's Support and Safeguarding service for homeless 16/17 year olds
- 95%+ homelessness prevented in four of the last six² years
- 77% score for peer review – highest in sub region; this was part of progress towards achieving the Government's 'Gold Standard'. See Appendix 3 of the HMR
- 2010/11 to 2015/16 – Just over 1,300 households assisted to move into the PRS, of which 760 assisted financially
- Localpad website tailored and established for North Somerset – free advertisement for landlords
- Private sector leasing – 46 homes procured in 18 months, including some empty properties brought back into use
- Improved processes for the discharge of homeless people from hospital and training delivered for partners
- Progressed improved emergency housing options for young people
- Improved processes established for the recovery of Housing Benefit (HB) from Bed and Breakfast (B&B) placements

Our aim is to build upon these achievements and deliver further improvements to meet the gaps identified in the HMR.

¹ Extensive multi-agency liaison for these vulnerable groups plus the use of the MARAC (multi-agency risk assessment conference) approach for domestic violence and ASB

² The lowest percentage for 'homelessness prevented in the period 2010/11 to 2015/16 was 93.5%

4. Homelessness Reduction Act

This private members' bill became law in April 2017. The Act amends Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 and will extend the duties of local authorities (LAs) to homeless and threatened with homelessness households. Major features of the Act include:

- Establishes that free, initial advice must be of a uniformly high standard regardless of e.g. priority need or household type.
- Changes the point at which a (homelessness) 'prevention duty' starts, from 28 days before someone is likely to be homeless, to 56 days; and extends the duty regardless of priority status, local connection and intentionality.
- Confirms a 'prevention duty' on LAs to take steps for 56 days to relieve homelessness (to those in the bullet above) to secure accommodation; if the duty is not discharged then priority need applicants would potentially become statutorily homeless.
- Specifies that public agencies (e.g. Police, hospitals) should refer those who are either homeless/at risk of being homeless to LA homelessness teams.

This more comprehensive duty to assisting those threatened with homelessness has been welcomed by many agencies working with homeless people. North Somerset already engages with and gives advice to all those approaching it and welcomes the opportunity to further reduce homelessness. At the same time it is also recognised that these extra duties will have resource implications for LAs, and the government has committed nationally to additional homelessness prevention funding of around £48m over the next four years to help meet these costs. We are awaiting confirmation of the amount NS will receive and will then have an opportunity to assess the extent to which the funding will help mitigate the impact and enable the council to meet the new duties placed upon it. We have produced a more detailed summary of the Act at Appendix 3.

Finding accommodation for additional households will be difficult in an environment where this is already proving hard. As with any major change we will review and update the PHS actions as the full consequences of the Act become apparent.



5. Homelessness Review (HMR) 2016/17 – Summary of Findings

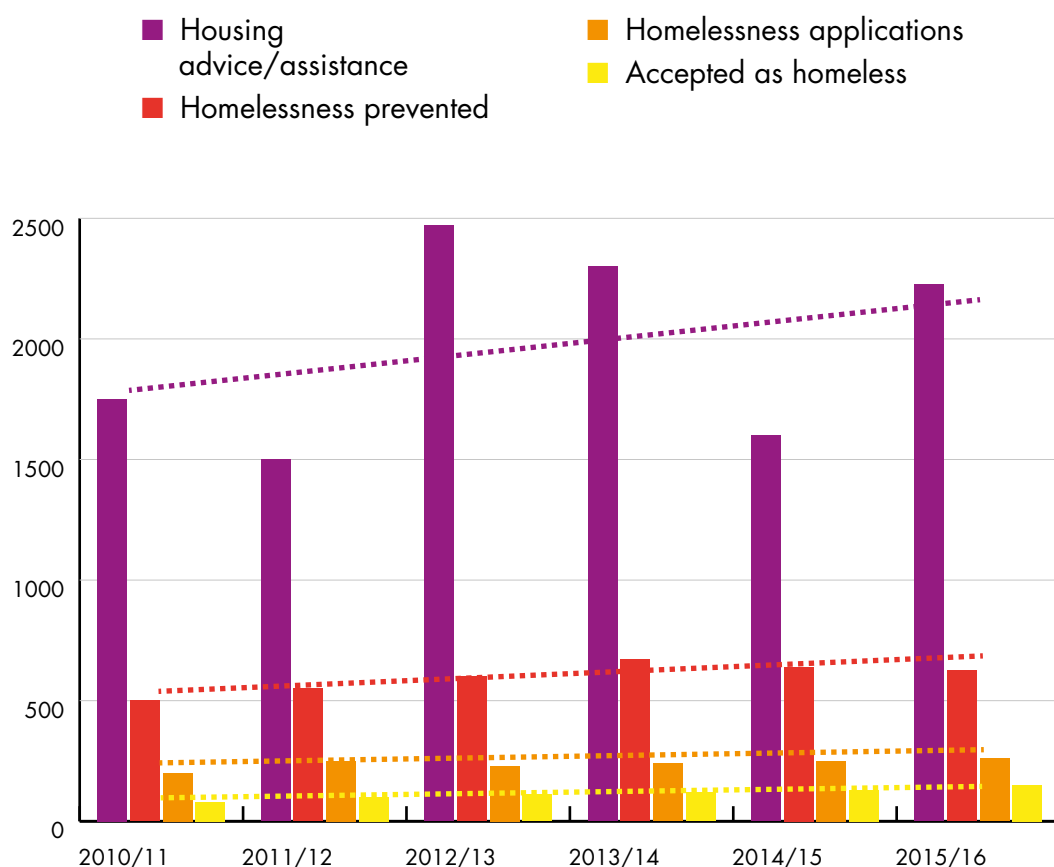
We have included here information and data from the Homelessness Review (HMR) that we feel is the most significant. If you are looking at this document on line you can link to the HMR on page 4.

North Somerset – Headline Homelessness Trends¹

Most councils use the information in Figure 1² below as key indicators of trends around housing advice, homelessness and prevention of homelessness. It includes the level of demand for housing advice and assistance, the amount of homelessness formally prevented, formal applications as homeless, and acceptances. Advice and assistance is defined in the supporting document the HMR 2016/17.

Figure 1 (dotted lines are trend lines)

North Somerset Homelessness advice, prevention, applications and acceptances



¹ **Note on the figures in this PHS generally:** We have aimed to keep the Figures (i.e. graphs/tables) in this PHS as simple as possible. If you wish to look at the detailed numbers behind the graphs these are in the HMR

² We have used the term 'Figure' in the PHS and 'Table' in the HMR to avoid confusion

Figure 1 above shows that for all four measures the trend is upwards.

The demand for in-depth housing **advice** has remained at a high level, in excess of 2,200 cases per year in three of the last four years, which is an average of almost 43 cases per week in 2015/16. There was sharp increase in advice between 2011/12 and 2012/13 and it has not since returned to the lower levels experienced before that time. 2014/15 did not represent a fall in demand, but 'bedding in' new recording systems.

Instances of **prevention** have averaged 644 cases per year in the last three years, with a slight fall of 7% in 2015/16 from its peak in 2013/14. That is an average of around 12 households where homelessness is prevented per week in the last year. A more detailed breakdown of prevention methods is at Figure 5 below.

Homelessness **applications** have been in the range of 264 to 268 for four of the last five years, an average of five applications per week. It seems very unlikely applications will reduce for the foreseeable future to below 200 as they were in 2010/11.

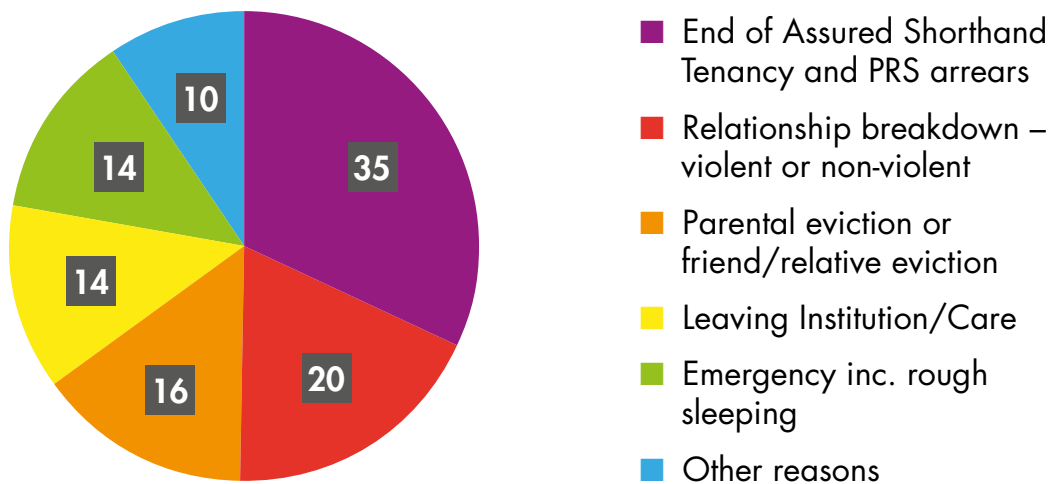
Acceptances have moved above 100 per year in the last two years having been in the range 79-99 for the four previous years. That is two acceptances per week in 2015/16.

Reasons why households became homeless

Figure 2 below shows the primary reasons households accepted as homeless became homeless for 2015/16. The full six year picture is available in the HMR.

Figure 2

Reason for Homelessness 2015/16



From PIE Section E3¹

¹ The PIE is a statistical return about homelessness completed by all LAs and submitted to Government every quarter.

The most common **reason for homelessness** is 'the end of AST'¹. Anecdotal evidence is that some landlords do not renew ASTs rather than take action for rent arrears and other tenancy breaches. If you combine the 'end of AST' and 'private rental arrears' this means about a third (32%) of all accepted homelessness cases are a result of a private sector tenancy coming to an end.

'Relationship breakdown – violent and non-violent' was the second highest reason for homelessness in 2015/16. It has fallen slightly by around 23% from the previous year. However, it is still a major reason for homelessness and it is vital that our effective domestic violence (DV) services are in place.

The reason 'parents no longer able/willing to accommodate' appears to be on a downward trend which may be due to the success of mediation work by housing advisors and partner agencies. We have combined it above with 'friend/relative no longer able/willing to accommodate' which in any one year has accounted for between five and nine cases.

Young people who have formerly been in care becoming homeless is currently on an upward trend (see Priority Need text below). Children's Support and Safeguarding and housing advisors work very closely around such cases.

There is a very small incidence of mortgage arrears cases and social housing arrears cases; no more than four cases for each in any one year over a six year period which shows very few accepted homelessness people become homeless from these sectors. If the PRS could be made as 'secure' as the social housing sector then it might go towards preventing almost a third of all homelessness cases. Whilst fixed term tenancies are becoming more prevalent in the social housing sector² we do not anticipate this will lead to a significant increase in evictions because social landlords have support mechanisms in place for issues such as arrears.



¹ AST = Assured Shorthold Tenancy

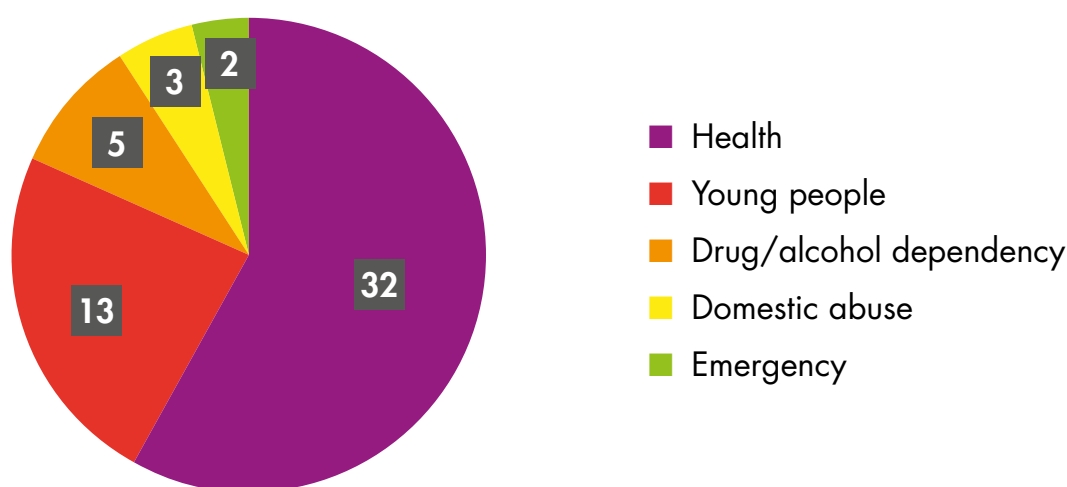
² Extended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016

Priority Need categories or 'types' of household accepted as homeless

In order to be entitled to a 'homeless duty'¹ a household must be in 'priority need' e.g. have a dependent child or children or be vulnerable in some other way. Of the 109 accepted homeless cases in 2015/16 54 (50%) were households with child/ren and the remaining 55 were households with no dependents, virtually all single people ('singles') with just a few childless couples. Figure 3 below shows how the priority needs for the 'singles' were broken down.

Figure 3

Priority Needs 'Singles' 2015/16



Priority needs, key trends:

Households with child/ren make up around 54% of the households accepted in 2015/16, down from 61% of the total in 2010/11. This is part of a longer term trend where vulnerable single people are becoming a bigger proportion of those accepted as homeless. Households accepted as a result of relationship breakdown (both violent and non-violent) have averaged around 23 cases per year, 20 cases in 2015/16, just under one in five of all cases. This represents a fall from one in four cases last year, but it is still a very significant issue. We work closely with our domestic violence partner agency, Gemini, to get the right support to these households.

Young people: the number of young people becoming homeless who had previously been in care has increased in the last three years, with between 10-15% per year of all those in priority need from this group. In the period 2010/11 to 2012/13 there were two or less homeless care leavers per year, in the years 2013/14 to 2015/16 this had grown to an average of 11 per year. All the care leavers involved have been over 18. This is a vitally important issue for the council as we fulfil our corporate parenting role. See page 25 for more on the response to this.

¹ As opposed to information and assistance

Health: physical and mental health issues – people with these needs represent 29% of priority need cases in the last two years.

Violence: households experiencing violence will be both single people and households with child/ren, though mostly the latter. The ‘reason for homelessness’ table above better captures the frequency of this issue.

Drug/alcohol dependency: whilst this may seem like a less common priority need housing advice staff have noticed that the number of homeless applicants who have complex, multiple needs as a result of chaotic lifestyles is increasing e.g. mental health needs and drug misuse. We discuss this in more detail in Section 6 ‘Key issues and actions to be delivered...’

General cautionary note – for all priority need data we looked at the primary priority need which ‘triggers’ the duty; a household could have more than one priority need e.g. a household with child/ren may also have experienced some domestic violence.

Homelessness prevention and related data

Homelessness prevention is defined as ‘activities that enable a household to remain in their current home where appropriate, or that provide options to enable a planned and timely move to help sustain independent living’. North Somerset Council has a strong record in tackling and preventing homelessness, enabling people where possible, to remain in their existing homes using a variety of methods including negotiation, conciliation and mediation with private landlords, mortgage lenders or families, and liaison with colleagues assessing HB. Whilst ‘staying put’/remain in home options have grown over the last six years from 10% in 2010/11 to 20% of all preventions in 2015/16, Figure 4 below shows clearly that assisting people to move to alternative accommodation is more prevalent, accounting for 80% of all cases in 2015/16.

Figure 4

Prevention Methods 2015/16

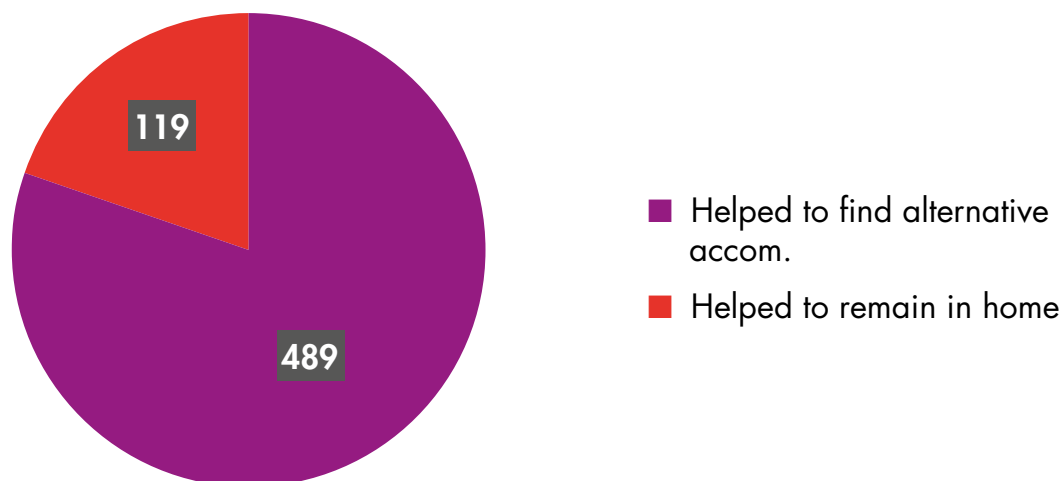
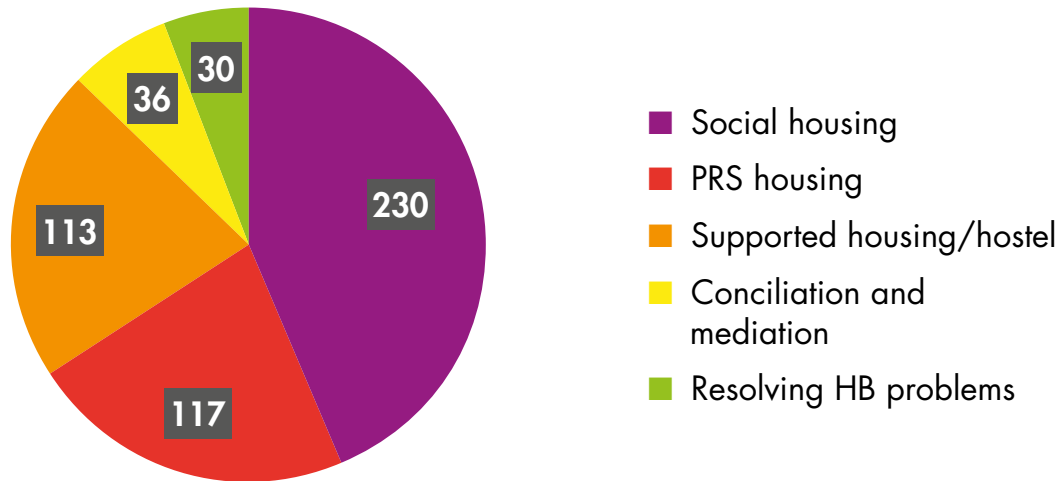


Figure 4a

'Top 5' Prevention Methods 2015/16



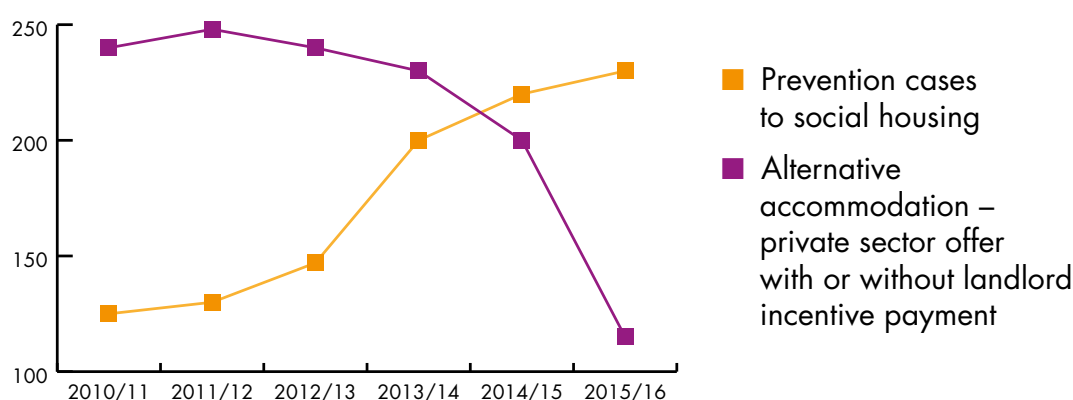
Both Figure 4 and figure 4a – data provided from PIE Section E10

In Figure 4a above we show the five main prevention methods which account for 85% of the preventions in 2015/16. The biggest of these is a 'social housing offer' which has grown every year for the last six years, an 84% increase in that period. The second largest prevention method is 'PRS offer'. There are two types of 'PRS offer' one is without financial assistance from the council (e.g. where household can afford their own deposit), and this has fallen 35% from its peak in 2013/14, but still represents six households housed per month. The other is with financial assistance where a landlord incentive payment is used e.g. guaranteeing the deposit or rent in advance; in 2010/11 this was 41% of all preventions, but has now fallen to 6%. We are currently working with almost three households per month in this way. The third highest prevention route is accessing supported housing or a hostel. This has fluctuated a little, but the trend is upwards and the increase is almost 80% since 2010/11.

We discuss in more detail later in the PHS and in our HMR the current problems with accessing the PRS for low income households/ those threatened with homelessness, but it is worth noting over the last six years our Housing Advice Team (HAT) helped house nearly 1,300 households into the PRS (with or without incentives).

A major concern is that the most frequently used preventative measure at the beginning of the six year period (i.e. 2010/11) was an offer of private sector accommodation **with or without** a landlord incentive payment', some 232 cases, 48% of all cases. By 2015/16 it was 117 cases, 19% all prevention cases. This highlights how hard it is becoming for potentially homeless and homeless people on a low income to access affordable, PRS lets (and for us to assist them to do so). Figure 5 below shows how the use of the PRS as a prevention route has decreased while social housing has increased

Figure 5 – Re-housing of prevention households into social housing and the PRS



Finding Accommodation

As set out above, the major issue faced in preventing and responding to homelessness is that our ability to find affordable PRS accommodation is shrinking. This is due to the lack of PRS accommodation at rents below the HB Local Housing Allowance (LHA) threshold and also because some landlords who will not let to those dependent or partly dependent on HB. As a result, often the only other option for alternative accommodation is social housing. Year on year, a higher percentage of social housing lettings are being made to prevention case households, from 18% in 210/11 to 31% in 2015/16. If the use of social housing continues to grow as a main response to preventing homelessness, then this will significantly affect the chances of those with a similarly pressing housing need (e.g. those with greater or equally poor housing conditions, those with a greater or equal level of vulnerability) on the HomeChoice (housing) register of getting access to social housing. In other words more people will be housed because of their very immediate housing need rather than longer term housing need.

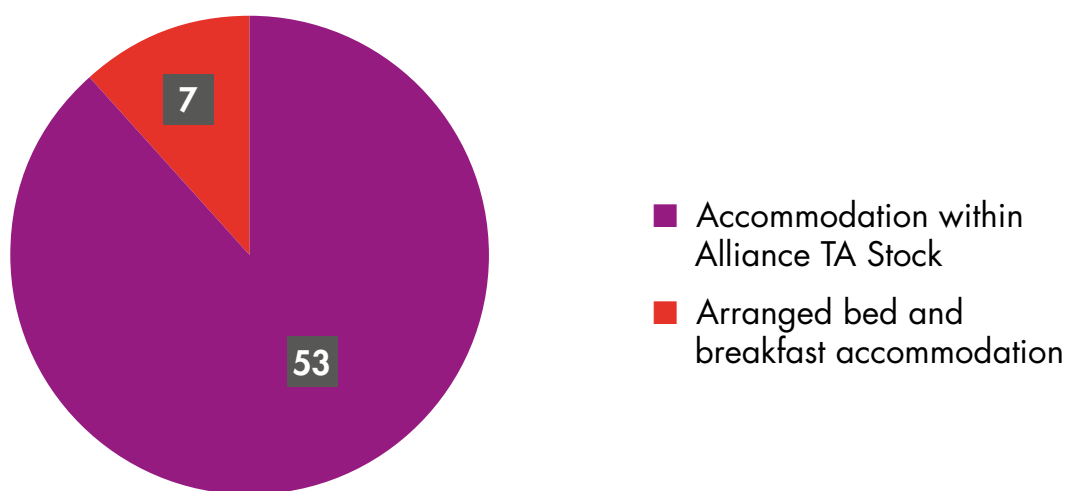
Temporary and emergency access accommodation

In some pressing homelessness cases it is not possible to go into longer-term housing so temporary accommodation (TA) is required. TA within North Somerset for homeless people is made available by partner housing associations, ensuring a good standard of accommodation is provided. Figure 6 below provides information about the temporary housing options used to house those to whom we had a homelessness duty in 2015/16.

The figure illustrates that NSC only used Registered Provider (RP)¹ TA and a small amount of privately owned B&B. B&B has, however only been used for families with child/ren on three occasions, and this was back in 2012/13. A range of supported accommodation is also used to house some households depending on their support needs (see the HMR for more detail on TA including the figures for the last six years).

Figure 6

Households in TA at 31 Mar 2016



Snapshot at end of year From P1E Section E6

Rough sleeping

Of the nine councils within Somerset and the West of England, North Somerset currently has the second lowest percentage of rough sleepers per 1,000 population². Figure 7 shows rough sleeping counts/estimates for 2015 for the nine councils, the most recent year we have figures for all of them. In North Somerset, 2014 saw an increase as rough sleeper numbers grew from two to six and 2016 saw a small increase from seven to eight. Please note figures are a snapshot and are verified using Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) methodology. The six year picture for rough sleeping in the HMR shows how relatively small numbers of rough sleepers in some other areas have grown to double figures and highlights the continuing need for prompt and ongoing intervention to stop this happening in NS.

NSC has been a member of the Avon and Somerset Rough Sleeper Group since its inception in 2011. The Group was provided with grant funding from the DCLG specifically to tackle rough sleeping and single homelessness. This funding has helped to part fund the YMCA outreach service in NS. Further funding from the DCLG was also provided to St Mungo's³ to dovetail with the work being carried out by the YMCA, by

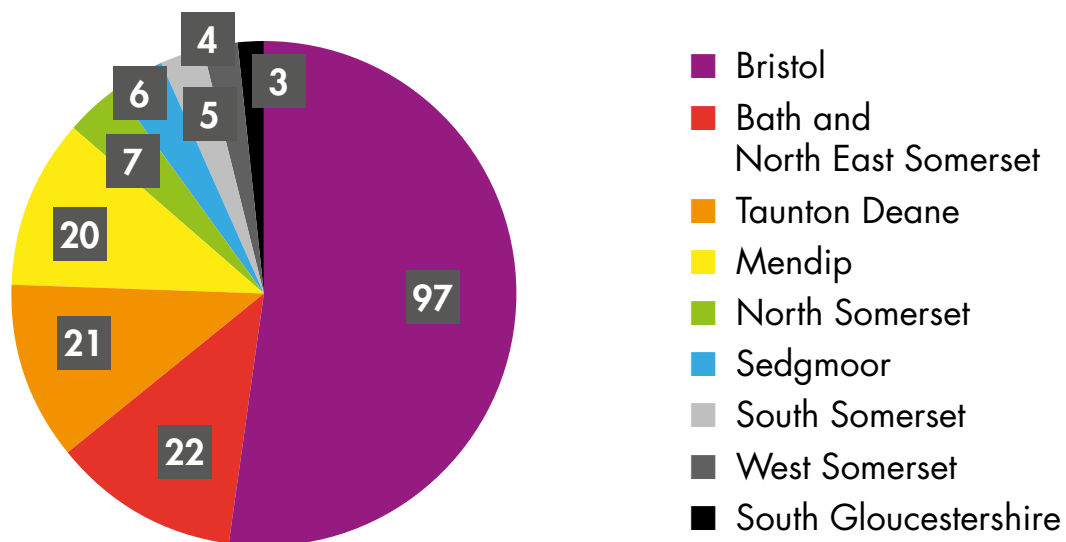
- 1 The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), the regulator, maintains a statutory register of social housing providers which lists private providers (not-for-profit and for-profit) and local authority providers. Most not-for-profit providers are also known as housing associations.
- 2 As at end of 2015
- 3 St Mungo's is a voluntary organisation which provides support to homeless people and rough sleepers across a number of local authority areas

expanding their Bristol-based outreach services to our area. This funding has meant that outreach services have been available for rough sleepers in our area since 2011 and has helped ensure provision of appropriate support for this group.

In 2016 DCLG launched a £10 million rough sleeping grant fund to enable local areas to intervene early with rough sleepers before their problems become entrenched. NSC submitted a successful joint bid with Bristol City Council. This has secured funding enabling St Mungo’s to continue rough sleeper outreach activities in NS until March 2019. NSC uses and encourages the use of Streetlink, a service which allows anyone (including rough sleepers themselves) to connect rough sleepers to the services available to them e.g. housing, health.

Figure 7

Rough Sleepers in Somerset and the West of England 2015



One of the actions recommended by this PHS is to establish a ‘new strategic partnership to monitor and develop services for rough sleepers and single homeless people’. In our invitation to a broad range of partner agencies to be part of this new partnership, we have emphasised that we see its remit including the associated issues of begging and street drinking in North Somerset. The first meeting to establish the new partnership is likely to take place in the summer of 2017.

Begging and Street Drinking

There is a perception that the number of people begging and street drinking in the towns of North Somerset has grown. It is in the interests of some of these people, in order to elicit sympathy from the public, to suggest that they are homeless. However as our rough sleeper outreach workers and Community Safety Team (which works to tackle anti-social behaviour) engage with people begging and street drinking they find that the majority do have accommodation and that housing and homelessness is not the issue.

In North Somerset anyone who is rough sleeping is offered support to access accommodation and help, and if they continue to rough sleep it is because they are not

prepared to engage with efforts to help them solve their housing and any underlying support issues. Where homelessness/housing is not the issue people are referred into the weekly multi-agency Street Community Forum co-ordinated by the Community Safety Team for consideration of appropriate multi-agency intervention.

North Somerset Council has adopted the following approach:

- anyone genuinely rough sleeping or where housing is the underlying issue is offered assistance to secure housing or a reconnection to their local area
- we encourage the public to give to charities that help rough sleepers and not directly to those who are begging
- we encourage the public to report anyone they think might be rough sleeping using a service called Streetlink
- anyone who is identified as begging or street drinking will be referred into the weekly multi-agency Street Community Forum for consideration of appropriate intervention

Repeat Homelessness

We looked at a large number of cases over three years where we accepted a prevention or homelessness responsibility. Some types of cases such as those where there was a multi-agency response have been excluded because ultimate resolution would not have rested solely with the Housing Advice Team. Figure 8 below shows our findings.

Figure 8 – Repeat approaches

	Number analysed	Repeat approaches	Percentage re-approaching
Prevention and homelessness decisions	1,403	173	12.3%

Period covered: 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2016

These findings indicate that for those cases where a prevention or homelessness decision was made there was a just over one in eight chance of that household re-approaching the council. There is likely to be a connection here to PRS tenancies ending. We will continue to monitor these figures on a rolling basis of three years' figures and put actions into place if repeat approaches increase.

6. Key issues and actions to be delivered by this Strategy

In this section of the PHS, based on our evidence and findings from the HMR – (you can link to the HMR here) <http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-council/policies/people-communitites-housing/> and consultation undertaken, we present a summary of the key issues and the actions we intend to take in order to tackle them. Some issues are ‘across the board’, affecting all homeless households or households threatened with homelessness; other issues relate to particular household types and their needs. We have placed these under the three thematic headings: Supply, Support and Prevention (see the action plan at Appendix 1 for further details). Actions arising from consultation (details included briefly in the next section of this PHS and in more detail in the HMR) include trying new initiatives such as shared accommodation and guardianship; boosting supply generally, particularly in the PRS; tackling client’s complex needs more effectively; and ensuring young people with high support needs are better assisted.

Supply

Difficulty of access to, and insecurity of the private rented sector (PRS)

The HMR identified that in the light of the welfare reform changes and the high demand for private rented accommodation in North Somerset, a major challenge is finding accommodation that households can afford and landlords who are willing to accept households in receipt of Housing Benefit (HB) and who have been homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The council relies on the PRS as a major source of accommodation for those we have a duty to house and as a prevention tool. We work closely with and incentivise private landlords and letting agents to secure accommodation for those we need to house. Dedicated staff work with both landlords and tenants to help find suitable accommodation at an affordable rent. To help address this we provide access to ‘incentives’ such as a deposit or rent in advance for prospective tenants, but there is often a shortfall between the amount PRS landlords charge and the level of HB/LHA¹ available for the size of property. We regularly review our incentives to see what else we can do to persuade more PRS landlords to work with us. Failure to access the PRS can have a knock-on effect by increasing the number of households having to be placed in temporary accommodation and also places pressure on social housing supply.

The HMR also shows that the most common reason for households presenting as homeless is ‘the end of AST (Assured Shorthold Tenancy) which represents about a third (32%) of all such cases.

The council is currently working to develop a ‘Finance and Support model’ which will assist applicants to cope with, and manage, their own debt and tenancy and living costs, and avoid eviction.

¹ Housing Benefit is called Local Housing Allowance (LHA) for tenants in the PRS

ACTIONS

We will:

- work to increase affordable PRS supply with longer term tenancies (PHS action plan number SY3, Housing Strategy action 4.4)
- develop shared housing¹ options in both the PRS and social sector (SY2).
- explore the feasibility of property guardianship (SY6).
- examine whether a new ethical lettings agency can help us access more properties to help fulfil our prevention role (SY7).
- meet any new demand for PRS housing and address any adverse effects on existing supply brought about by the Hinkley Point development through a number of initiatives (SY5, Housing Strategy action 4.4).

Pressure on temporary accommodation (TA)

The HMR concluded that due to decline in the availability of PRS accommodation and RPs becoming more wary of housing very chaotic people or households with a record of rent arrears, it is becoming harder to move households on from accommodation that was intended to be temporary.

ACTIONS

We will:

- continue our efforts to minimise the amount of time households spend in stay in TA (SY1).
- maximise the recovery of B&B charges, by ensuring this, we can ensure the budget for TA can be used most efficiently (SY4).



¹ Shared housing, particularly for young people was reflected in consultation

Support

People with complex needs

When we look at the priority need data (Figure 4), we can see that one of the biggest groups is people with mental health needs. For the last six years this group have been in the range of one in five of all priority need cases. An analysis of the housing and support requirements of people with mental health needs has recently been undertaken. NSC will deliver the actions to address gaps identified in the analysis. This will involve a number of service areas and the external agencies we work with.

The HMR also shows that increasingly, many people who approach as homeless with mental health needs also have other presenting issues such as drug/alcohol or offending. These are some of the most complex and chaotic homeless people and there are currently not enough housing options available for them. All Supporting People commissioned accommodation services carry out their own risk assessments to ensure the best 'fit' for the accommodation and the safety of other residents. Commonly the accommodation is also targeted at one specific client group, therefore people with multiple needs can often be rejected. The same is also true of general needs accommodation, as social housing providers and private landlords who are becoming more risk averse. Ultimately, therefore, some of the most vulnerable and chaotic homeless people may only have recourse to unsupported hostel type accommodation with very few move-on options. Floating support can be provided if people with complex needs are willing to engage.

In order to deal with the increasingly complex needs of homeless people we will continue to develop our multi-agency approach, working closely with e.g. Adults and Children's Support and Safeguarding and other partners e.g. Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership to ensure there is sufficient support and accommodation.

We are currently looking at ways to progress additional housing options for those with complex mental health needs. This will not only benefit homeless households, but also those people with mental health needs who are housed, but where their current accommodation is inadequate.

Care leavers and Vulnerable Young People 16/17 year olds

The HMR explains in more detail how the council has a particular responsibility for ensuring care leavers and young people have suitable housing and support. In the case of care leavers the council has a corporate parenting role and has developed a package of support, called the 'Local Offer' for care leavers. This includes help finding employment, training or education; support with life skills. Recognising this wider duty, our Housing Advice Service has specialist officers who work with Children and Young People's Services to commission tailored solutions to the housing needs of these young people. A bespoke support package called Step Up is in place to help care leavers make the transition from supported housing to independent living (manage a tenancy).

The requirement for emergency and supported housing solutions and move-on accommodation, including for young people is a particular need and increasing. Whilst

there is a good level of supported housing for younger people (120 units), the majority (74%) is low level support, whereas there is a considerable need for accommodation with higher levels of support. NSC has already engaged with providers to 're-configure' a number of supported flats to provide higher support. This also illustrates the need for the council to have nomination rights for those most in need. See prevention text (page 25) for details of a care leavers' housing action plan that is being developed.

ACTIONS

We will:

- make sure that as housing support and supported housing is commissioned/re-commissioned it better meets the needs of homeless people including e.g. vulnerable young people, disabled people, people with complex needs and people with mental health needs (ST1, Housing Strategy action 6.1).
- set up a multi-agency panel to find appropriate housing and support services for people with complex and multiple needs (ST3).
- investigate whether an assessment centre for new rough sleepers would improve outcomes for this group (ST5).
- improve our ability to help vulnerable young people through more effective partnership working with Family Support services (ST2).
- deliver housing actions arising from the Housing with Support Strategy; includes analysis of the housing and support requirements of people with mental health needs (ST6).

Developing housing solutions for vulnerable and disabled people threatened with homelessness

Another issue identified by the HMR is achieving a better match between the type of housing available in North Somerset and the households needing and requiring it, and this is a challenge which our Housing Strategy is seeking to address. More specifically, for disabled people experiencing homelessness there is a need for an improved range of options. We will work with partners to seek to increase the supply of suitable housing to meet the emergency and short-term needs of disabled people including as supported housing contracts are renewed. Through our Housing Strategy we will seek to deliver with partners additional long-term adapted housing. Both strategies will respond to information from the emerging Housing with Support Strategy (page 9).

ACTION

We will:

- make sure that as housing support and supported housing is commissioned/re-commissioned it better meets the needs of homeless people including e.g. vulnerable young people, disabled people, people with complex needs and people with mental health needs (ST1, Housing Strategy action 6.1).

Prevention

Early intervention

Preventing homelessness is a crucial element of our strategy as we recognise the importance of early intervention. The council will have new prevention duties placed upon it as result of the Homeless Reduction Act.

Our Housing Advice Team (HAT) will continue to lead on work towards ensuring we achieve the Gold Standard above. We have given an update on our progress to achieve the Standard as Appendix 3 of the HMR.

The analysis undertaken into repeat homelessness demonstrates that for those cases where a prevention or homelessness decision was made there was a just over one in eight chance of that household re-approaching the council and as a result there is a need to keep this issue under review as we further develop prevention services .

ACTIONS

We will:

- establish new systems to meet our obligations from the Act and ensure we bid for extra resources in the context of this Strategy (P3).
- work towards achieving the government Gold Standard for Homeless Prevention (P8).

Hospital discharge

It is important that we help ease pressures on the NHS by ensuring hospital discharge happens in a timely and efficient way and that appropriate support is put in place for homeless people. We work closely with a range of partners to achieve this and will continue to develop hospital discharge arrangements.

ACTION

We will:

- continue to improve the arrangements for the discharge of homeless people from hospital (P1).



Rough sleeping

As our HMR explains in some detail, the numbers of rough sleepers in North Somerset are small compared to some local authorities, but each rough sleeper represents a challenge we need to meet. Rough sleeping is often the 'tip of the iceberg' in terms of issues like hidden homelessness. We are not complacent about the problem and are making efforts to keep the number as low as possible. As illustrated earlier in the PHS, our Community Safety Team are already taking action to tackle the problems of begging and street drinking, which are often perceived as associated with homelessness.

ACTIONS

We will:

- widely promote Streetlink.org.uk as the preferred referral route for rough sleepers and ensure a focus beyond Weston (P4).
- Our actions around improving the range of accommodation both temporary and long-term and our action to improve services for those with complex needs (all above) will also help rough sleepers. Note also the link to the consideration of a possible assessment centre for rough sleepers (ST5).

Partnership working

An Appreciative Inquiry into homelessness by the People and Communities Board made a number of recommendations and these are also reflected in our action plan. One key recommendation was to establish a new strategic partnership around rough sleeping and single homelessness, to bring key partners together to harmonise our efforts across stakeholders. This partnership will also look at the issues of begging and street drinking in North Somerset.

ACTIONS

We will:

- establish a new strategic partnership to monitor and develop appropriate services for rough sleepers, single homeless, begging and street drinking (P2).
- work in partnership to tackle and prevent homelessness (Housing Strategy Action 6.2).

As is set out in our HMR, the majority of those threatened with homelessness will have some recourse to the welfare benefits system, which is undergoing major reform. The specific issue of how PRS rents are often higher than HB is covered earlier in this PHS. We recognise the increased risk of tenants getting into debt as a result of the welfare reform changes and being at risk of homelessness and we will continue to help tenants who have financial difficulties access appropriate debt advice services. More generally, if we are to support and empower homeless people and people threatened with homelessness, we need to understand the effects of welfare reform on both the micro level (as we give face to face advice to a homeless household) and at the macro level (how it is reducing the supply of housing available to the poorest households).

ACTION

We will:

- continue to work in partnership to mitigate any adverse effects of welfare reform relating to housing; (ST4).

'Family' Homelessness

As explained in the priority needs data above there is roughly a 50:50 split of homelessness into households with child/ren and 'singles'. We have already set out a number of actions for single people above. For families with children we will develop links with other agencies such as children's centres to tackle the issues and impact of relationship breakdown.

ACTION

We will:

- explore the role of children's centres in helping to prevent family breakdown – workers located in children's centres already make contact with and support vulnerable families (P5).

Care Leavers' and Vulnerable Young Persons' Services

As illustrated on page 25, getting services right for care leavers and other vulnerable young people is a significant challenge. A housing action plan is currently in development following a best practice review and is likely to be completed by the summer of 2017. NSC will deliver the tasks arising from that action plan

ACTION

We will:

- deliver the actions arising from the care leavers' housing action plan (P7).

7. Consultation

Approach to Consultation

HMR stage consultation – as part of the development of the HMR, the Housing and Homelessness Prevention Forum (HHPF) was the main body for external consultation. This Forum has representatives of partner agencies involved in tackling homelessness. We also consulted with staff who work in the council's Housing Advice Team (HAT) and HomeChoice Team. In addition, we consulted other key internal 'partners' such as 'Supporting People', Housing Benefit services, public health, adult social care and children and young people's services.

PHS stage consultation – at this stage we consulted a wider group of stakeholders. This wider group were sent a link to the council's 'Have Your Say' webpage on which there was a draft of this PHS, a draft of the HMR and a pro forma for comments. These stakeholders included: the general public, elected Councillors, parish councils, HHPF partners and internal partners (again), the Housing Strategy database of consultees and equalities groups.

Summaries of consultation and full details

Please note that we have briefly summarised responses/comments received as part of both stages of consultation below with full details at Appendix 1 of the HMR.

Summary of HMR stage consultation

Partner agencies

At the May 2016 meeting of the HHPF a presentation was given on developing the HMR and PHS, plus an early draft of the HMR was provided alongside a short questionnaire.

The overwhelming feedback was for the need for more accommodation, especially smaller units, available quickly. Another issue was getting HB problems resolved more quickly. In relation to their specialist areas of work a mismatch between Housing Benefit levels and rental costs was a key concern, also the need for more prompt advice.

North Somerset Council Staff

A short presentation was given to Housing Advice Team (HAT) and HomeChoice staff.

Staff concerns include the issue of affordability in the PRS, but also the issue of not enough housing which meets the specific needs of homeless households. Another concern was the problem of move-on from temporary accommodation (TA) and supported housing. Some staff suggested that there should be more leasing of properties from PRS landlords. This would transfer the risk of any vacant rental periods from landlords to the leasing agency, and guarantee an uninterrupted cash flow to landlords.

Summary of PHS consultation from Have Your Say

This consultation stage generated five responses, four from external partners and one internally. Our attention was drawn to some changes which had occurred while writing the PHS; we have updated the text to reflect these. Other issues raised were the need for a link to empty homes, more reference to Gypsy and Traveller issues and to included references to projects which provided support to homeless people. We have included all of these, in in either the PHS or the HMR. Final comments were that the HMR document was too long and the PHS Action Plan (AP) was not focused enough on delivery. We have included a response to both these issues, but particularly in reference to the Action Plan we have stressed that it is an initial plan which will develop over the lifetime of the strategy. The internal respondent asked us to make more explicit links to how the PHS supports/will support some other council initiatives and better illustrate how the PHS supports the council's Corporate Plan. We have covered both of these in Section 2 of the PHS.

Consultation with Adult Services and Housing, Policy and Scrutiny Panel (ASH Panel)

In March 2017, the PHS and HMR were taken to the ASH Panel (a panel of Councillors) for scrutiny and discussion. As well as noting/agreeing a number of the challenges the PHS has identified, they made two major recommendations. These are set out in the table below:

Panel said	We did
There appears to be higher number of people begging, and whilst outreach work indicates most are not homeless, it is important to show in our PHS that advice and support is on offer to anyone on the streets.	Some new text has been added to the PHS to explain how the council is working to minimise adverse, anti-social effects of begging and street drinking as well as rough sleeping.
They wanted to see more emphasis on how engagement and partnership are being pursued in the PHS	We have revised the PHS to make clear our firm commitment to partnership and engagement.

People and Communities Board Appreciative Inquiry

Because of the importance of homelessness to the North Somerset Partnership, the People and Communities Board held an Appreciative Inquiry into homelessness. This yielded a stimulating and diverse set of suggestions reflecting the need to:

- improve strategic co-ordination and focus,
- identify further opportunities to prevent and reduce homelessness, and
- predict and plan for changes, including legislative requirements

The most relevant actions needed to respond to the Inquiry have been included in the PHS Action Plan at Appendix 1.

8. Contact details and questions

For questions regarding the Preventing Homelessness Strategy (PHS) and Homelessness Review (HMR) contact the Housing Development and Strategy Team

Email: housing.solutions@n-somerset.gov.uk

Phone: **01934 427 487**

Write to: Housing Development and Strategy, Town Hall, Walliscote Grove Road,
Weston-super-Mare, BS23 1UJ

Appendix 1 – PHS Action Plan

It is worth noting that a number of actions in our recently published Housing Strategy are also highly relevant to preventing and tackling homelessness. However rather than repeating these here if you are reading this PHS on-line you can link to the Housing Strategy Action Plan – <http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-council/policies/people-communitites-housing/>. This PHS Action Plan (PHSAP) will be a ‘live’, ongoing plan which continues to be developed throughout the five years of the PHS. Some actions will require that projects are set up to deliver the actions e.g. a letting agency, some will need sub action plans e.g. to ensure we maximise opportunity from all the provisions of the Homelessness Reduction Act, and others will need metrics developed e.g. how much shared accommodation developed. At least annually the PHSAP will be monitored to ensure delivery of our homelessness actions.

We have put the actions in the PHS Action Plan under three themes:

- Supply
- Support
- Prevention

A Glossary of terms and abbreviations is available at Appendix 2

Ref.	PHS Actions and performance measures	Target Date	Lead (and partners)
SUPPLY			
Work with partners to improve existing and develop/innovate new accommodation solutions to meet the need of homeless people			
SY1	Reduce length of stay in temporary accommodation (TA) to no higher than an average of 16 weeks ¹	Mar 2018	Housing Solutions
SY2	Develop shared housing options for single people with private and social landlords	Dec 2019	Housing Solutions, partner RPs
SY3	Increase the supply of affordable PRS accommodation and encourage landlords to provide 12 month tenancies by developing an enhanced suite of incentives for landlords	June 2018	Housing Solutions
SY4	To make our TA budget stretch further, investigate recovery processes of B&B charges for those people in receipt of Universal Credit (UC) who are placed in emergency accommodation.	Mar 2018	HAT, NSC Finance

¹ Responding to this, specifically addresses issues raised in consultation

Ref.	PHS Actions and performance measures	Target Date	Lead (and partners)
SY5	Plan to meet the housing needs and impacts on housing supply arising from the Hinkley Point development (mitigation funding provided through S106 agreement). Initial plan developed – to be reviewed and further developed over the lifetime of the project.	Ongoing	Housing Solutions
SY6	Investigate the possibility of developing a 'Property Guardianship' (temporary housing solution) schemes for rough sleepers/homeless people in NS	2019	Housing Solutions, St Mungo's (subject to service funding), PSHT
SY7	Explore the feasibility of developing an ethical letting agency to increase the amount of PRS housing available to the council to fulfil its prevention role	Sept 2017	Housing Solutions

SUPPORT

Provide a range of support services that sustain independent living and reduce or avoid the risk of households becoming homeless

ST1	As supported housing is commissioned/ re-commissioned, seek to ensure it better meets the needs of homeless people e.g. higher support where required, especially for vulnerable young people (care leavers and 16/17 year olds), disabled people, people with complex needs/ mental health needs	2018	Housing Solutions, Adults and Children's Support and Safeguarding (CSS)
ST2	Develop partnership working with Family Support to support young people.	Ongoing	Housing Solutions
ST3	Set up multi-agency panel to manage and co-ordinate the response to homeless people with complex and multiple needs ¹	Mar 2018	Housing Solutions, CCG, CSDAT
ST4	Continue to work in partnership to mitigate adverse effects of welfare reform relating to housing (e.g. benefit cap, UC); improve links with relevant agencies	Ongoing	HAT, DWP, employment advice, 'Skills for Life' tenancy training, Liberata (DHP)

¹ E.g. combinations of issues such as mental health needs, misuse of alcohol, misuse of drugs i.e. dual diagnosis etc.

² There may be insufficient number of potential service users who could benefit currently from the development of new provision

³ Some changes to mental health provision have already been enacted as a result of this report

Ref.	PHS Actions and performance measures	Target Date	Lead (and partners)
ST5	Explore potential of assessment centre for 'new to the streets', rough sleepers for short-term placements which encourages engagement ² . Continue to work with service providers to develop existing services that meet this need	Mar 2019	Strategic partnership, rough sleeper outreach
ST6	Deliver housing actions arising from the Housing With Support Strategy (HWSS), which included analysis of the housing and support requirements of people with mental health needs ³	As per HSS	Housing Service Commissioning Team
PREVENTION			
Act to prevent homelessness and help sustain independent living by enabling household to remain in their current home or achieve a planned move to new housing			
P1	Continue to improve the arrangements for the discharge of homeless people from hospital.	Mar 2018 then review	HAT, AWP, NHS, CCG
P2	Establish a new strategic partnership to monitor and develop services for rough sleepers, single homeless people, those begging and street drinking	Dec 2017	NSC Housing, CSDAT, St Mungo's
P3	Establish new systems to meet our obligations from the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and monitor impact including on resource requirements	Act expected to come into force Apr 2018	Housing Solutions
P4	Widely promote Streetlink.org.uk as the preferred referral route for rough sleepers and ensure a focus beyond Weston c/f ST5	Ongoing	New strategic partnership (at P2), all housing partners
P5	Explore the role of children's centres to help to prevent family breakdown and homelessness	Ongoing	NSC CSS
P6	Work in partnership with Children's Support and Safeguarding to maximise the benefits from new 'edge of care' service (utilising social impact bond funding) to reduce and prevent homelessness	Ongoing	HAT

Ref.	PHS Actions and performance measures	Target Date	Lead (and partners)
P7	Deliver actions arising from the care leavers' housing action plan	Ongoing	CSS, HAT
P8	Continue to work towards the Government's 'Gold Standard' for homelessness prevention ¹	Bronze by Dec 2017	HAT

This Action Plan will be reviewed on a regular basis and the latest version can be accessed via the contacts below.

Performance Indicators (PIs)

In addition to the Action Plan there are a number of ongoing PIs which we monitor and report quarterly, listed below. You can see the latest results on in the HMR or access them via the contact details in this PHS.

- Number of Households in temporary accommodation
- Percentage of young people who present as homeless and are prevented from needing to enter long-term LA care
- Average length of stay in temporary accommodation (weeks)
- Number of homeless households in priority need who are prevented from being homeless
- Total number of (potentially) homeless people seen divided by homeless; prevention and advice
- Value of Deposit Bonds ended; value of claims made; claim rate against Deposit Bonds

¹ Progress toward the Government's Gold Standard is included in Appendix 3 of the HMR

Appendix 2 – Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

(covers PHS and PHS Action Plan)

AWP	Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership		
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group	c/f	Cross reference (link to)
CSDAT	Community Safety and Drug Action Team	CSS	Children’s Support and Safeguarding (a council service)
DCLG	Department of Communities and Local Government (a central government department)	Deposit Bond	A deposit or rent in advance paid to secure accommodation for low income homeless households in the PRS
DHP	Discretionary Housing Payment (a transitional payment for some of those adversely affected by changed to HB)	DWP	Department of Work and Pensions (a central government department)
HAT	Housing Advice Team	HB	Housing Benefit (a benefit to pay for housing costs for those on low incomes)
Housing Solutions	Includes HAT, HomeChoice and Strategy and Commissioning Teams	LA	Local Authority
NHS	National Health Service	NS (C)	North Somerset (Council)
P1E	A statistical return around homelessness completed by all LAs and submitted to Government every quarter		
PRS	Private Rented Sector (homes rented from private landlords)	PSHT	NSC Private Sector Housing Team
RP	Registered Provider (usually a housing association)	TA	Temporary accommodation (housing used temporarily to house homeless households)
TBC	To be confirmed		

Appendix 3 – Detail of Homelessness Reduction Act

This private members' bill became law in April 2017. The Act amends Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 and will extend the duties of local authorities to homeless and threatened with homelessness households. We have produced a summary of the Act below. In brief it:

- clarifies that free and detailed information/advice on preventing and relieving homelessness must be given to any person in the LA's area¹.
- establishes that the initial advice must be of a uniformly high standard regardless of e.g. priority need or household type.
- confirms the advice service should be designed with certain vulnerable groups in mind (such as care leavers and ex-armed forces personnel).
- requires LAs to carry out an assessment of all eligible applicants' needs, and the steps to be taken by both the LA and the homeless applicant are set out in writing in a personalised plan (PP). Steps must be reasonable and achievable.²
- establishes that failure to agree a PP must be recorded in writing and a household not in priority need not undertaking their PP actions would be issued with a warning. Priority needs are explained on page 14 of this PHS.
- changes the point at which a (homelessness) 'prevention duty'³ starts, from 28 days before someone is likely to be homeless, to 56 days⁴; and extends the duty regardless of priority status, local connection and intentionality⁵.
- confirms a 'prevention duty' on LAs is to take steps⁶ for 56 days to relieve homelessness (to those in the bullet above) to secure accommodation; if the duty is not discharged then priority need might potentially become statutorily homeless.
- introduces a 'relief duty' for those actually homeless (regardless of status) and those that have not been helped by the 'prevention duty' above. At no stage are non-priority need homeless applicants entitled to emergency/temporary accommodation, but they are entitled to the interventions listed at footnote 13.
- clarifies LA has 'duty to help to secure', which means homeless applicants owed the 'prevention duty' or 'relief duty' can find their own accommodation, they might just need help with the deposit.

1 Advisory service can be outsourced, but the underlying duty rests with the LA

2 This is a crucial area where DCLG explanation of the Act says 'Government is committed to funding the cost of new burdens'

3 Either helping them to stay in their current accommodation or helping them to find a new place to live

4 The day a valid Section 21 Notice expires or the day before a valid Section 8 Notice expires and it is reasonable to think the landlord (L/L) will apply for a possession order

5 Broadly speaking the only people not eligible to the 'prevention duty' are persons from abroad not eligible under Part 7 of the 1996 Act.

6 E.g. provide a rent deposit, negotiate with landlord, mediation, debt advice etc.

- sets out the actions a LA may take to cease helping homeless applicants (usually following a warning) if they deliberately and unreasonably refuse to co-operate (for instance with their PP). This would exclude barring those not co-operating because of e.g. mental health issues.
- gives applicants the right to ask for a review of a homelessness decision under the Act's powers
- specifies that public agencies (e.g. Police, hospitals) should refer those who are either homeless/at risk of being homeless to LA homelessness teams.
- makes provision for certain care leavers, to make it easier for them to show they have a local connection with both the area of the LA responsible for them and the area in which they lived while in care, if different.

The proposals from the Act will increase the number of households the council has a statutory duty to help. Finding accommodation for additional households will be difficult in an environment where this is already proving hard. As with any major change we will re-model this PHS and the engagement, housing advice and homelessness services delivered in North Somerset, as the full consequences of the Act become apparent.

Appendix 4 – **Related Strategies and Plans**

Affordable Housing Delivery Plan 2011-15

Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), adopted 2013

Core Strategy, adopted 2012

Corporate Plan 2015-19

Empty Property Delivery Plan 2016-21

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment Action Plan, ongoing

Health and Wellbeing Survey 2014 and Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Home Energy Conservation Act report 2015

Home Ownership Strategy

Housing Strategy 2016-21

Draft Housing with Support Strategy 2017-27

Joint Learning Disabilities Strategy 2015-20

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (Health)

NHS Developing Sustainability and Transformation Plan
(Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire working together)

Draft People and Communities Board Strategy 2017-20
(includes Health and Wellbeing issues)

Private Sector Housing Delivery Plan 2013-15

Third Sector Commissioning Strategy (including Supporting People)

(Emerging) West of England Joint Spatial Plan 2016-36

Wider Bristol Housing Market Area, Strategic Housing Market Assessment, adopted 2015