

Homelessness Strategy 2018





Foreword

by Councillor Peter Hiller

Welcome to our new Homelessness Reduction Strategy.

This is a vitally important Strategy for this council, which sets out our ambitious but realistic plans to manage and reduce homelessness in Peterborough.

The homelessness problem in our City and across the country has increased significantly over the past two years. In Peterborough we have seen a 43% year-on-year increase in households approaching the council for help and advice because they are at risk of becoming homeless, and this has resulted in a sharp increase in the need for the council to accommodate households in temporary accommodation. Often, this accommodation is not appropriate for long term use - for example, bed and breakfast-style accommodation - and can be disruptive and unsettling for households. This Strategy sets out our plans to reduce the reliance we have on this kind of temporary accommodation and builds on the principle that it is far better to prevent a household from becoming homeless rather than dealing with the consequences once they have to leave their own home.

In response to the national homelessness challenge, the Government has introduced the Homelessness Reduction Act. I warmly welcome its introduction, shifting as it does the focus of councils and our partners more firmly towards *prevention*, and reducing the need to provide temporary, and often inappropriate, accommodation. This Strategy embraces all aspects of the new Act and builds on the already effective relationships we have with our partners.

This council, in recognition of the sharp increase in households approaching us for support because they are at risk of becoming homeless, has already introduced a number of key policy changes:

- We have secured the use of additional temporary accommodation through lease arrangements with private sector landlords
- We have bought a significant number of empty homes back into use, securing them for homeless households
- We have agreed to spend up to £35m to increase the availability of homes for households who are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless
- We have made some key changes to our housing allocations policy to ensure that people with the greatest need are given as much opportunity as possible to secure housing
- We have increased investment in our Housing Needs service, who are on the front line of managing homelessness and supporting homeless households, so that they can refocus around the requirements contained within the Act

It's unlikely we'll eradicate completely the need for temporary accommodation, but our Strategy will endeavour to limit its use to those circumstances where it is completely unavoidable and also for the shortest time possible. To support this the Strategy does aim to

eradicate the need for the council to use bed and breakfast-style accommodation. We recognise it is important for households to have their own front door, even if their accommodation is temporary, and to have access to the household facilities that you and I most probably take for granted.

In recognition of the rapidly changing homelessness policy landscape, and to ensure we are responsive to the investments and policy changes we have already made ourselves in Peterborough, this methodology will be reviewed after two years. I firmly believe it needs to remain current and adapt proactively to whatever demands for service the council is faced with.

Finally, I would like to thank everybody involved in supporting the development of this Strategy, and in supporting our hard-working and professional council officers to manage the increased demands of homelessness in recent years.

I am excited about the ambition and the passion we have to help make a difference to those finding themselves in very difficult and challenging circumstances. I truly believe we must strive to restore dignity and hope and I look forward to our Strategy's rapid and effective delivery. This council will be at the forefront of homelessness prevention and will be well placed to support households and communities to succeed and thrive in our City.

1. Introduction

The Council continually strives to make Peterborough the best possible place to live, work and visit. This ambition is embedded in both the Council's Corporate Objectives and the Corporate Plan. All residents should have access to a home that is of a good standard which they can afford and are able to sustain and maintain.

The current population of Peterborough is expected to rise from 199,000 to 227,890 in 2036, and with this increase in population comes a range of opportunities and challenges for housing provision. Although around 20% of stock in Peterborough is affordable housing, the number of households accepted as 'statutory homeless' resulting in a duty for the Council to offer them temporary accommodation and assistance with re-housing, is higher than the average for England, despite the national picture also showing increases. Although we work extensively with households to try and prevent homelessness by providing advice and assistance on their housing situation and alternative housing options, the number of households accepted as statutory homeless continues to grow.

The Council is required to review homelessness within the area and update its Homelessness Strategy every five years. This strategy comes at a time of increasing rates of homelessness, both locally and nationally, as well as the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act due in April 2018. With this in mind this strategy will detail our aims over the next 2 years and will be reviewed in 2020.

The Council recognises the devastating effect that homelessness can have on households and that good quality housing providing a stable and secure home environment contributes to the health and wellbeing of our residents. Through this strategy the Council will address the causes of homelessness in the area; introduce initiatives to prevent homelessness wherever possible; provide sufficient suitable temporary accommodation for those households that are or may become homeless; ensure that a good supply of suitable permanent accommodation is available and appropriate support for people who have previously experienced homelessness in order to prevent it happening again.

A positive action plan has been created (explained fully in Appendix 1) which sets out the goals for the future and shows that the Council is dedicated to providing the best service for its clients.

2. Background

Sections 1-3 of the Homelessness Act 2002 requires all Councils to produce a Homelessness Strategy every five years. The purpose of the Strategy is to:

- Address the causes of homelessness in the Council's area
- Introduce initiatives to prevent homelessness wherever possible
- Ensure measures are in place to secure sufficient temporary accommodation for those households that are or may become homeless; and
- Ensure that appropriate support is available for people who have previously experienced homelessness in order to prevent it happening again.

The Council has a legal duty to ensure that there is a free advice and information service about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness in the district. The Council also has a duty to take reasonable steps to make sure that accommodation continues to be available for someone who is threatened with homelessness and is likely to have a priority need under the terms of the homelessness legislation. The Code Of Guidance that accompanies the homelessness legislation goes further in that it states that Councils should offer a broad range of advice and assistance and not wait until homelessness is a likelihood or imminent before taking action.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 commenced on 3rd April 2018.

The main thrust of the Act is to refocus English local authorities on efforts to prevent homelessness. While many authorities already do this, it would become a duty to prevent as opposed to the current duty to assist when homeless. The Act amends Part 7 of the *Housing Act 1996*.

The Act will have an impact on the delivery of services and will have a resource impact.

What is homelessness?

People can be homeless if they have nowhere to stay and are living on the streets, they can also be considered homeless even if they have a roof over their head. Homelessness can include households who are:

- staying with friends or family
- staying in a hostel, night shelter or bed & breakfast accommodation
- squatting
- at risk of violence or abuse in their home
- living in poor conditions that affects their health
- living apart from their family because they don't have a place to live together

The Council also works with households who are threatened with homelessness in order to prevent them from becoming homeless in the first place.

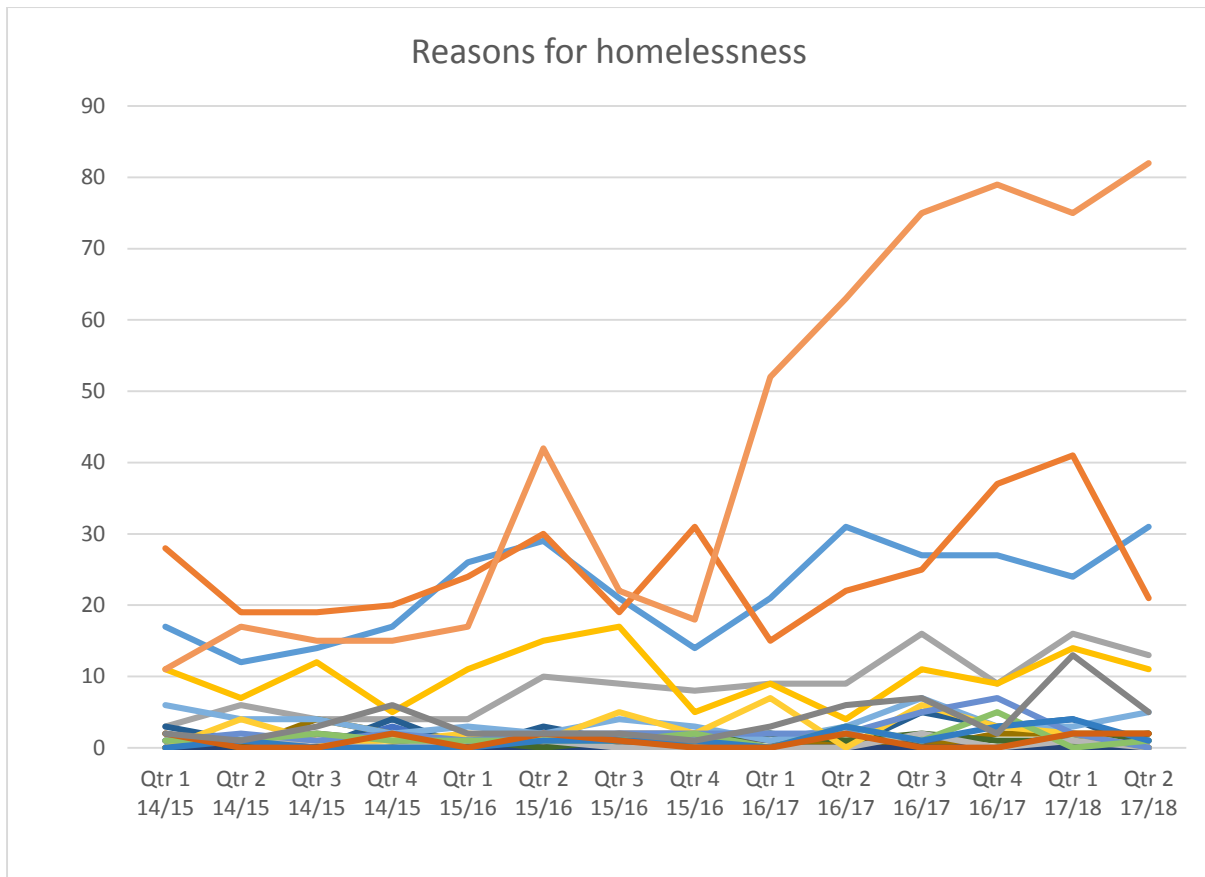
Some people consider homelessness, begging and rough sleeping to be the same; this is not the case. People who are involved in street begging are not always homeless, and people who rough sleep are not always involved in street begging, and as the above definition shows homelessness is much wider than just rough sleeping.

Traditionally the main reason for households becoming homeless has been due to relationship breakdown and parents or friends and family no longer willing to accommodate households whilst they secure a suitable permanent home through the housing register/choice based lettings scheme or the private sector.

A reduction in the availability and accessibility of the private sector has resulted in there being a significant shift in the main reason for homelessness.

The number one reason for homelessness in Peterborough mirrors the national picture, in that private sector assured shorthold tenancies being ended is now the main reason for households becoming homeless. The graph below shows the main reasons for homelessness since 2014:

	Apr 14 - Mar 15				Apr 15 - Mar 16				Apr 16 - Mar 17				Apr 17 - Mar 18	
	Qtr 1 14/15	Qtr 2 14/15	Qtr 3 14/15	Qtr 4 14/15	Qtr 1 15/16	Qtr 2 15/16	Qtr 3 15/16	Qtr 4 15/16	Qtr 1 16/17	Qtr 2 16/17	Qtr 3 16/17	Qtr 4 16/17	Qtr 1 17/18	Qtr 2 17/18
Parent no longer willing to accom	17	12	14	17	26	29	21	14	21	31	27	27	24	31
Friends / relative cannot accommodate	28	19	19	20	24	30	19	31	15	22	25	37	41	21
Non-violent relationship breakdown (partner)	3	6	4	4	4	10	9	8	9	9	16	9	16	13
Violent relationship breakdown (partner)	11	7	12	5	11	15	17	5	9	4	11	9	14	11
Violent relationship breakdown (other)	0	1	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	2	1
Racially motivated violence	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other forms of violence	3	1	0	4	0	3	1	2	2	0	5	3	4	0
Racially motivated harassment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other harassment	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	0	1	0	0	1
Mortgage arrears	1	0	4	2	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	2
Rent Arrears (LA)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rent Arrears (RSL)	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	2
Rent Arrears (Private sector)	6	4	4	2	3	2	4	3	1	3	7	3	3	5
Termination of AST (Private)	11	17	15	15	17	42	22	18	52	63	75	79	75	82
Loss of private rented/tied accom (other)	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0
End of NASS supported accom	0	4	1	1	2	1	5	2	7	0	6	3	2	0
Prison leaver	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	5	7	2	0
Hospital discharge	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	0	3	1	5	0	1
Leaving LA Care	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	3	1	3	4	1
Left HM Forces	2	0	0	2	0	2	1	0	0	2	0	0	2	2
Other reason	2	1	3	6	2	2	2	1	3	6	7	2	13	5
Total Acceptances	90	78	82	85	94	145	110	92	124	152	191	190	206	178



3. The Previous Strategy

The Council's previous Homelessness Strategy 2013-18 had 4 strategic aims. These will remain of value throughout the lifetime of this strategy with all success and learning acquired being maintained for its duration. These aims are:

Strategic Aim 1 – Preventing and relieving homelessness through a robust partnership approach

We are aware that in order to provide cost-effective and responsive services we cannot work in isolation. We will deliver our services in partnership with our voluntary and statutory sector partners to provide the best possible solutions.

Strategic Aim 2 - Increasing access to accommodation

We will continue to maximise the opportunities for a range of accommodation choices for homeless persons and person threatened with homelessness and continuing to increase the accommodation choices available persons in housing need.

We will continue to develop and deliver a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups that includes support for both clients and landlords. We need to ensure that those most affected by the welfare reforms are able to access a range of accommodation solutions and we will make best use of the private rented sector.

Strategic Aim 3 – Reduce and prevent rough sleeping

Rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness and where people are the most vulnerable. We will continue to build on our partnership approach to reducing and relieving rough sleeping. This work will include projects that will enable the city to deliver the No Second Night Out principles.

Strategic Aim 4 – Promoting settled lifestyles and sustainable communities

Ensuring that homeless households are given the support to resettle within the community and thrive through purpose and encouragement.

4. Where are we now?

The detail below gives the context and challenges that face the city at the roll-out of this strategy. Key objectives and an action plan (Appendix 1) will focus on preventing homelessness and breaking a cycle of despair for many.

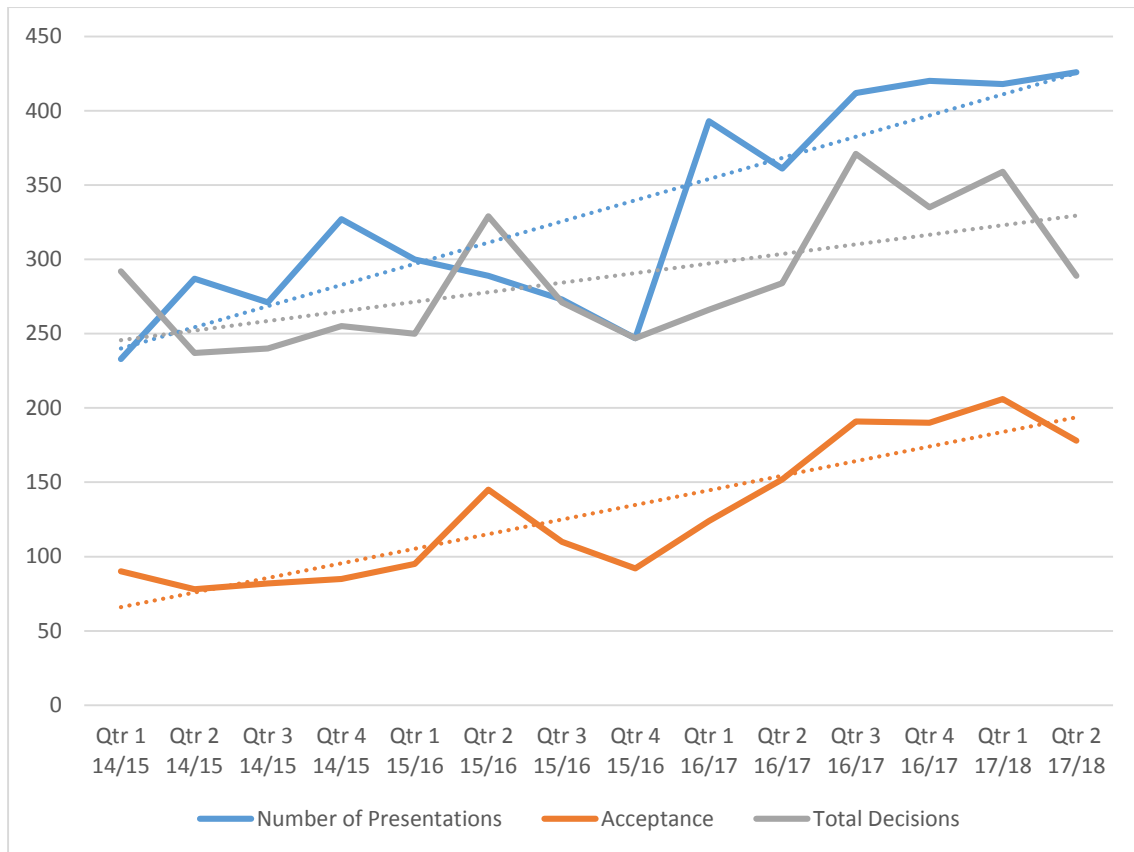
Increasing numbers of households seeking assistance

The last year has been particularly challenging for the Housing Needs Team. In the period April 2016 - March 2017 the Council saw increasing levels of households presenting to the Council for assistance as they were homeless or threatened with homelessness. 1586 households presented to the Council as it was confirmed that they may be homeless or threatened with homelessness within the next 28 days. This represented an increase of 43% when compared to the previous year when 1109 presentations were made. In the first three quarters of 2017/18 the level of presentations has been at a similar level to 2016/17.

Where a homelessness presentation is made to the Council and we are satisfied that the household may be homeless and eligible to make an application for assistance this triggers a duty upon the Council to investigate whether the household is owed a full housing duty and is “Accepted as Homeless”. This further investigation confirms the household is homeless or threatened with homelessness, takes into account any vulnerabilities of members of the household, the reasons for them becoming homeless and determines whether they have a connection with the City.

The graph below shows the number of homelessness presentations, decisions made and numbers of households accepted as homeless each quarter since 2014:

	Apr 14 - Mar 15				Apr 15 - Mar 16				Apr 16 - Mar 17				Apr 17 - Mar 18	
	Qtr 1 14/15	Qtr 2 14/15	Qtr 3 14/15	Qtr 4 14/15	Qtr 1 15/16	Qtr 2 15/16	Qtr 3 15/16	Qtr 4 15/16	Qtr 1 16/17	Qtr 2 16/17	Qtr 3 16/17	Qtr 4 16/17	Qtr 1 17/18	Qtr 2 17/18
Number of Presentation	233	287	271	327	300	289	273	247	393	361	412	420	418	426
Acceptance	90	78	82	85	95	145	110	92	124	152	191	190	206	178
Total Decisions	292	237	240	255	250	329	271	247	266	284	371	335	359	289



Rental affordability issue increasing

The Council has previously been successful in utilising the private sector in preventing homelessness and discharging its homelessness duties; however recent increases in rental costs of private sector accommodation while local housing allowance rates have been frozen, has meant that the majority of properties available in the private sector are no longer affordable for those households that are reliant on benefits to cover or assist with rents.

In addition there appears to be an increasing reluctance from some landlords to accept households who will be in receipt of any support with Housing Benefits and Universal Credit. This is mainly as these benefits are paid in arrears and if any issues arise meaning benefits are suspended or reduced, landlords are already out of pocket making it more difficult to manage.

Changes to taxation rules, which mean that landlords are now unable to deduct mortgage interest costs from their profits before paying tax, has meant that some landlords with smaller portfolios no longer see this as profitable and are selling their properties. The opportunity for us to discharge homelessness duties or to utilise the private sector to prevent households' homelessness is now few and far between.

The increase in use of temporary accommodation, while partly down to the increase in the number of households approaching us for assistance, is being exacerbated by the supply of accommodation reducing at the same time effectively producing a bottleneck in temporary accommodation.

Rising levels of rough-sleeping

Increases in homelessness and increases in rough sleeping generally go hand in hand and Peterborough is no different. Peterborough's last rough sleeper count/estimate, which was a

snapshot of one usual night, identified that 31 rough sleepers were sleeping out in the city. The table below shows how this has changed over the last 8 years:

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
No of Rough Sleepers	21	17	12	11	17	15	21	31
Percentage Change	n/a	-19%	-29%	-8%	55%	-11%	40%	48%
Percentage Change since 2010	n/a	-19%	-43%	-48%	-19%	-28%	0%	48%

Nationally numbers of rough sleepers have increased year on year over the same period and a percentage increase of 169% over the 8 years. The table below shows the changes nationally over the same period.

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
No of Rough Sleepers	1768	2181	2309	2414	2744	3569	4134	4751
Percentage Change	n/a	23%	6%	5%	14%	30%	16%	15%
Percentage Change since 2010	n/a	23%	31%	37%	55%	102%	134%	169%

Temporary Accommodation

Traditionally the Council used hostel accommodation to house homeless households while investigations were ongoing and until suitable permanent accommodation was secured. Where hostel accommodation was fully occupied B&B type accommodation was used as a short term emergency placement until a hostel vacancy could be secured.

B&B type accommodation is only meant as a short term option, but as the numbers of households presenting to the council has been increasing use of this type of accommodation has increased as no alternative accommodation options were available.

As well as being unsuitable accommodation for households over a prolonged period B&B accommodation is a costly option for the Council. The level of subsidy that the Council can recover from Housing Benefit to cover these costs leaves a significant shortfall.

In recognition of the increases in demand the Council has taken steps to reduce the use of B&B type accommodation by securing use of alternative self-contained temporary accommodation options this increased the contracted provision to 216 units.

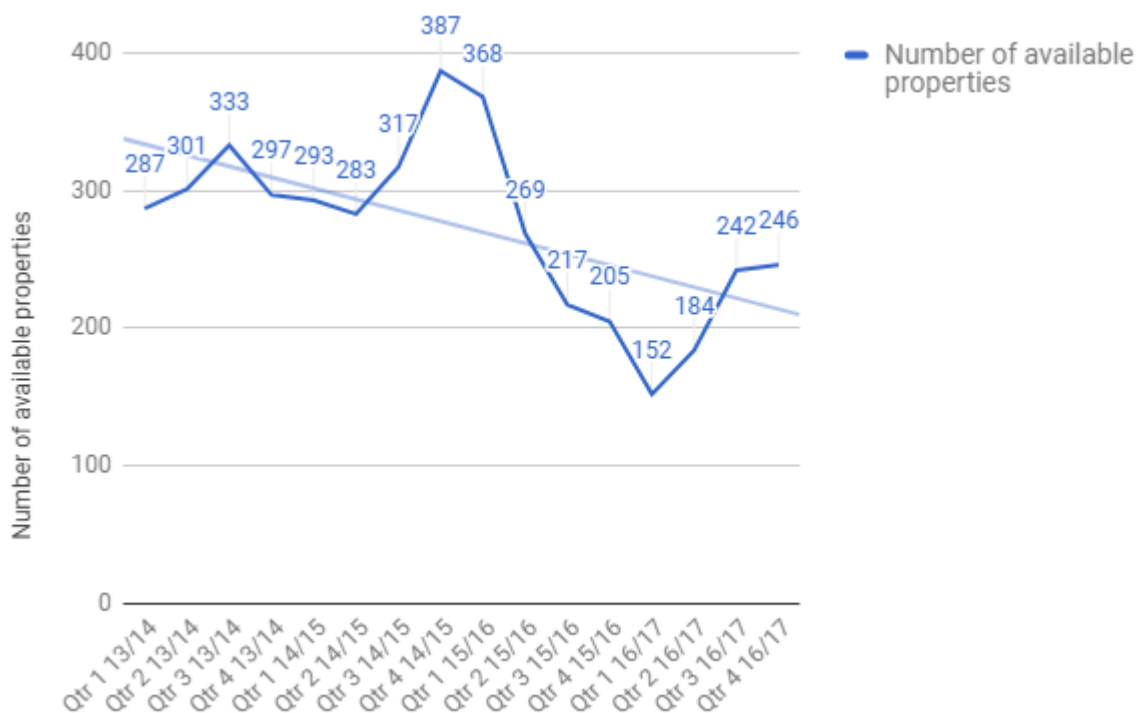
The Council has agreed to invest in Medesham Homes, the Council's joint venture with Cross Keys Homes, which will increase this provision further by c.250 properties over the medium to long term. These options may include the buying property off plan, conversion of office space to residential or buying property off of the open market. While this has and will continue to go some way to supporting the increased level of need this has not removed the need for use of B&B type accommodation at this time.

Supply of Accommodation

Generally, those households to whom the Council accepts a full housing duty will be allocated accommodation with a social landlord. The Council has arrangements with ten housing associations in the city to allocate its vacant properties through the Peterborough Homes Choice based lettings scheme. The common allocations policy was developed to ensure that households who are accepted as homeless and therefore owed a full housing duty are given high priority in order to assist them with a prompt move into suitable permanent accommodation.

In addition to the Housing Register the Localism Act 2011 gave local authorities the power to discharge the full housing duty by securing suitable accommodation in the private sector. Previously the combination of these two options has been more than sufficient in meeting both the demand from households who have presented to the Council as homeless and those living in unsuitable housing allocated through the Housing Register.

Unfortunately while the demand from households requiring assistance has been increasing the availability of permanent accommodation options has been decreasing. The graph below shows the number of properties, which have been made available for allocation from our partner housing associations through the choice based lettings scheme:



The Homelessness Strategy is an annex of the Housing Strategy. The Housing Strategy 2016-21 identifies the need to increase the supply of homes which people can afford. It is essential that we increase the numbers of affordable rented homes in order to reverse the current trend if we are going to be successful in our ambitions to prevent homelessness or to reduce the time spent in temporary accommodation for homeless households.

5. What are the challenges ahead?

The Full Rollout of Universal Credit (UC)

In November 2017 Universal Credit was rolled out to include all new benefit claimants and those currently in receipt of benefits who have a change in circumstances.

The main changes for households include:

- Integration of six core benefits and tax credits into a single payment. The claims processes for different benefits will be integrated and households will receive just one payment.
- A shift away from a mix of weekly, fortnightly, four-weekly and monthly payments to a standard monthly payment.
- A new 'fixed' monthly assessment system that will replace the annual 'flexible' assessment period for tax credits, with payment monthly in arrears.
- Payment of Housing Benefit to social tenants rather than direct to the social landlord.
- Introduction of a single recipient model where the award is paid into one bank account.

The Homelessness Reduction Act

The main thrust of the Homelessness Reduction Act is to refocus English local authorities on efforts to prevent homelessness. While many authorities already do this, it would become a duty to prevent as opposed to the current duty to assist when homeless. The Act amends Part 7 of the *Housing Act 1996*. Its measures include:

- An extension of the period during which an authority should treat someone as threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days.
- Clarification of the action an authority should take when someone applies for assistance having been served with a section 8 or section 21 notice of intention to seek possession from an assured shorthold tenancy.
- A new duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness.
- A new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants.
- A new duty on public services to notify a local authority if they come into contact with someone they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

The Act will have an impact on the delivery of services and will have a resource impact. Councils currently offer advice and assistance to all households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, for those who are not in priority need our duty currently ends after we have given advice on how the applicant can secure accommodation themselves.

The changes require us to formulate and work through an action plan with each applicant. This action plan would be owned by the advisor and the applicant and if followed effectively should result in the applicant not becoming homeless or being assisted in securing alternative accommodation before they have to leave their current home.

Where successful this would prevent the need for costly emergency accommodation and would have significant benefits in reducing upheaval for families who are faced with homelessness. However, as detailed in this report the significant shortage of available accommodation both in the social and private sector will mean for certain households the chances of us securing alternative accommodation prior to a household becoming homeless is reduced.

In addition to the additional resource implications required to meet these additional burdens, there is likelihood that in order to be successful in preventing homelessness, we would need to have the ability to offer financial assistance to households in order to reduce arrears. While we offer this currently this would be extended to non priority groups.

The future of Supported Housing

In October 2017, the Government announced details of how short stay supported housing will be funded in the future. The key elements of the new proposal are:

- Housing costs will continue to be paid through the benefit system up to LHA level
- A local authority top-up, with ring-fenced funds, will be transferred across from the Department for Work and Pensions and allocated by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

There are significant concerns about the long term security of a local ring fenced grant. The impact of the removal of the Supporting People ring-fence funding in 2009 is still being felt in the sector and there is nothing in the current proposals that provides confidence in the long term sustainability of funding. This may impact on the availability of short stay homeless provision that can be sourced from providers.

It is important that the Council ensures that services for homeless people continue to be supported. There is uncertainty that the Government will ensure that local authorities get the right amount of money and it is unlikely that this funding can grow in line with future need.

It is also essential that that existing tenants are protected in the transition from one system to another.

6. Objectives

This strategy will continue to focus on all four strategic aims mentioned earlier. Homelessness can be complex and not every case is the same. The situation is affected by national and local circumstances that are always changing, but this does not prevent the Council from aiming to achieve the best for its citizens. It must strive to prevent homelessness and break the cycle.

The actions the Council and its partner agencies will take to help deliver these aims are set out in these ten key objectives:

Objective 1: Eliminating the use of Travelodge type accommodation and reducing / eliminating the use of B&B type accommodation for temporary accommodation

Objective 2: Ensuring the effective implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act and embracing the culture change this will bring

Objective 3: Creating a suite of prevention tools which will give the Housing Needs team improved chances of success in preventing homelessness

Objective 4: Support landlords and tenants to support them to overcome landlord/tenant issues which may lead to eviction action

Objective 5: Bringing together services to work holistically in ensuring financial inclusion, income maximisation and debt advice are accessible and prioritised in order to support preventative work

Objective 6: Increase the supply of self-contained temporary accommodation options in order to support the reduction of B&B use

Objective 7: Explore the potential of a Social Lettings Agency/Guaranteed Rent Scheme for private landlords

Objective 8: Ensure that information and advice on housing and homelessness prevention is widely available and that our customers are seen at the earliest possible opportunity

Objective 9: Maintain services and create an effective supported accommodation pathway for single homeless and rough sleepers

Objective 10: Increase the focus on performance supported by clearer data

7. Annual Review

The 2018 - 2020 Homelessness Reduction Strategy, along with its Action Plan, will be monitored and reviewed annually, and reported to the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee.

Key indicator progress to be monitored will be:

- 1) The total number of households approaching the Housing Needs Service for assistance who at the point of presentation are:
 - a) Homeless
 - b) Threatened with homelessness within 56 days
 - c) Have received a valid section 21 notice from their landlord
- 2) The number of households who were homeless, but had their homelessness relieved
- 3) The number of households who were threatened with homelessness who had their homelessness:
 - a) Prevented
 - b) Relieved
- 4) The number of households accommodated in temporary accommodation
- 5) The number of children accommodated in temporary accommodation
- 6) The number of households accommodated in B&B type accommodation
- 7) The number of households accommodated in B&B type accommodation in excess of 6 weeks
- 8) The number of 16 & 17 year olds accommodated in B&B accommodation
- 9) The number of rough sleepers known to be sleeping out
- 10) The number of known rough sleepers who have left the streets
- 11) The number of new rough sleepers

Appendix 1 – Homelessness Strategy Action Plan

Objective	Action	Target	Partners	Officer(s)	Target Date
1 Eliminating the use of Travelodge type accommodation and reducing / eliminating the use of B&B type accommodation for temporary accommodation	Investigate with current providers who have B&B type/shared accommodation within Peterborough the possibility of expansion of their portfolio to support our ambition to keep households in the city.	To increase the provision of provision in area by up to 50 units to meet current demand	B&B providers / Private Developers / Landlords	Head of Housing Needs / Temporary Accommodation Lead Officer	Aug 2018
	Research other providers capacity/willingness to work with the council in providing accommodation in the Peterborough area for homeless households.	To increase the provision of provision in area by up to 50 units to meet current demand	B&B providers / Private Developers / Landlords	Head of Housing Needs / Temporary Accommodation Lead Officer	Aug 2018
	Investigate with registered providers potential opportunities for increasing hostel type provision for temporary accommodation	To identify whether any potential sites exist and assess costs for development/operation	Registered Providers	Head of Housing Needs / Temporary Accommodation Lead Officer	Nov 2018
	Ensure no 16 or 17 year olds are placed into unsuitable B&B type temporary accommodation	A partnership approach adopted to ensure no unsuitable placements	Children's Services / Youth Services / Supported Accommodation Providers	Housing Needs Operations Manager / Team Manager – Family Safeguarding	May 2018
	Utilise preventative tools to keep households in their current accommodation	Support those at risk of eviction to remain in their own home by assisting with arrears / affordability issues / mediation	Private Landlords / Householders / County Court	Housing Solutions Officers / Visiting Officers / STS Client Team	June 2018

		Utilise preventative tools to secure alternative suitable accommodation prior to having to leave the current accommodation	Support those who cannot be kept in their current home to move to alternative suitable permanent accommodation	Private Landlords / Registered Providers / Revs & Bens	Housing Solutions Officers / CBL Officers / Placements Officers / STS Client Team	June 2018
		Where homelessness cannot be prevented utilise preventative tools to keep households in their current accommodation for as long as possible in order to identify more suitable temporary accommodation	Early identification of potential T/A need to enable suitable accommodation to be found	Private Landlords / Householders / County Court	Housing Solutions Officers / Temporary Accommodation Officer / Placement Officers	July 2018
2	Increase the supply of self-contained temporary accommodation options in order to support the reduction of B&B use	Work with private developers / landlords to procure additional units of self contained temporary accommodation to be used as an alternative to B&B type	Identify supply of c.100 units of self contained accommodation to be leased	Private Developers / Landlords	Head of Housing Needs / Temporary Accommodation Officer	April 2019
		Work with Medesham Homes to identify / deliver a pipeline of suitable self-contained accommodation to be used as temporary accommodation while demand exists and permanent supply going forward.	Identify / deliver c. 250 units of self contained units of accommodation. Use to be determined at handover.	Medesham Homes	Head of Housing Needs	March 2020
		Review the current lease with Stef & Philips for St Michael's Gate prior to agreed break to confirm need and make decision relating to entering final year.	To make an informed decision relating to the future need to enter into the 3 rd year and whether talks should be entered to discuss a lease beyond the current one	Stef & Philips / Commissioning Team / Legal Services	Head of Housing Needs	Nov 2018

		Review the current lease with Cross Keys Homes for Elizabeth Court prior to ending to determine whether continued need and possible extension.	To make an informed decision relating to the future need and whether talks should be entered to discuss a lease beyond the current one	Cross Keys Homes / Commissioning Team / Legal Services	Head of Housing Needs	June 2020
3	Ensuring the effective implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act and embracing the culture change this will bring	To review the current structure of the Housing Needs team and restructure the service to meet the requirements of the new legislation	To have a structure that is fit for purpose in effectively delivering on the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act	Human Resources	Assistant Director for Housing , Communities & Youth / Head of Housing Needs	April 2018
		Develop and implement a comprehensive training matrix for the Housing Needs Team to equip officers to meet the requirements of the act.	Housing Needs Officers have a full understanding of the duties under the act and feel well equipped to support clients effectively	Training & Development Team	Housing Needs Operations Managers	August 2018
		To upgrade/replace current Northgate Housing System to ensure an effective Housing Register and CBL solution is in place while ensuring officers are supported with the management of caseloads and to support clients in maintaining personalised housing plans.	To have a supported IT solution, which meets the needs of the service and its reporting requirements	Serco ICT	Head of Housing Needs	April 2018
		To review the current customer journey and adapt, embracing the opportunity for officers to work agile following the physical office move to Sandmartin House	Ensuring officers have suitable Communications/IT equipment to support Agile Working and customers are able to effectively access the service via a number of differing routes	Serco ICT / Property Services	Housing Needs Operations Managers	July 2018
		Ensure systems capture the required information and data	To be in a position to report the IT data required from the	Serco ICT	Head of Housing Needs / Housing	July 2018

to meet the DCLG's H-CLIC reporting requirements	launch of the Homelessness Reduction Act		Systems & Performance Officer	
Develop the Housing Pages on the councils website to ensure that information provided is accurate, current, supports applicants to make informed choices, gives realistic information not raising expectations and enables customers to self-help or electronically refer themselves into the service.	Pages to be fully updated and reviewed regularly so remaining current to reduce unnecessary contact with the service. Facility for clients to self-refer via web form.	Media - Comms Team	Head of Housing / Housing Needs Operations Manager	Oct 2018
Develop a Landlord forum for both private and social landlords are in attendance to discuss and remedy issues faced by landlords and the council in order to prevent the need for eviction action to take place.	Forum set up giving landlords and the Council networking opportunities in an informal setting	Private & Social Landlords	Head of Housing / Housing Needs Operations Manager	Dec 2018
Develop a Homelessness Forum with Statutory, Voluntary and Faith Sector partners to provide governance of the strategy moving forward.	Set up regular forum to review and progress the homelessness strategy	Registered Providers, Voluntary Sector Partners, Faith Sector Partners	Service Director for Communities & Safety	July 2018
Investigate & commission independent mystery shopper and stake holder surveys to constantly review and improve customer journey		Shelter/Crisis	Head of Housing / Housing Needs Operations Manager	April 2019
Develop an effective communications plan around homelessness and rough sleeping which provides		Media - Comms Team	Head of Housing / Housing Needs Operations Manager	Oct 2018

		information on key changes, successes and case studies year round.				
4	Creating a suite of prevention tools which will give the Housing Needs team improved chances of success in preventing homelessness	Change the use of the Rent Deposit Loan Scheme and expand to cover rent in advance & deposit where a potential property is affordable and suitable. Extending repayments period to 5 years	Increased opportunity to prevent and relieve homelessness by providing interest free loans		Housing Needs Operations Manager / Housing Solutions Officers	April 2018
		Review the current Discretionary Housing Payments Fund (DHP) to allow payments to clear rent arrears in order to keep households in their home.	Increased opportunity to prevent and relieve homelessness by clearing housing related debt	Serco Revs & Bens / STS client team	Senior Policy Manager / Housing Needs Operations Manager / Housing Solutions Officers	Aug 2018
		Utilise the Homelessness Prevention Fund to allow those not eligible for a DHP to be assisted in the same way.	Increased opportunity to prevent and relieve homelessness by clearing housing related debt		Housing Needs Operations Manager / Housing Solutions Officers	June 2018
		Create a landlord assurance scheme to support landlords concerned about the impact of Universal Credit and lower Local Housing Allowances rates to cover rent shortfalls where a tenant is in receipt of benefits	Increased opportunity to prevent and relieve homelessness by supporting potential rent arrears accrual		Housing Needs Operations Manager / Housing Solutions Officers	Aug 2018
		Investigate the setting up of a local mortgage rescue scheme based on the Government's Mortgage Rescue Scheme, which ended in 2015.	Prevention of homelessness by supporting a household to remain in their home and increasing available	Registered Providers	Head of Housing Needs	Dec 2018

			social/affordable housing stock			
5	Support landlords and tenants to support them to overcome landlord / tenant issues which may lead to eviction action	Set up referral processes so landlords are able to refer "at risk" cases into the service in order to receive support from a dedicated officer to overcome issues.	Online referral routes created and referrals received	Private Landlords / Registered Providers	Housing Needs Operations Managers / Housing Solutions Officers	November 2018
		Use prevention tools such as DHP and homelessness prevention fund to assist with rent shortfalls / payment shocks / rent arrears in order to prevent possession action	Clients supported to remain in their homes	Private Landlords / Registered Providers / Serco Revs & Bens / STS client team	Housing Needs Operations Managers / Housing Solutions Officers	September 2018
		To act as mediator between landlord and tenant where poor communication could lead to landlords seeking to obtain possession of their property.	Clients supported to remain in their homes	Private Landlords / Registered Providers	Housing Needs Operations Managers / Housing Solutions Officers	August 2018
		To support landlords faced with issues of anti-social behaviour from their tenant or associated persons where eviction action is being considered.	Clients supported to remain in their homes	Private Landlords / Registered Providers / Prevention & Enforcement Service	Housing Needs Operations Managers / Housing Solutions Officers / Senior Prevention & Enforcement Officer	August 2018
		Investigate scheme to support landlords left with no option but to sell their property due to financial difficulties or constraints related to repair obligations.	Clients supported to remain in their homes / increase the supply of affordable housing	Private Landlords /	Head of Housing Needs / Empty Homes	March 2019

		Support tenants to challenge possession action where landlords are not complying with the requirements of the Deregulation Act 2015	Clients supported to remain in their homes / Possession delayed for non compliance	CAB	Housing Needs Operations Managers / Housing Solutions Officers	August 2018
		Create and host a pre-tenancy training course for clients and encourage mandatory completion to prepare clients for the responsibilities they will have when they are offered a property.	Setting clients up to reduce the chances of repeat homelessness	Serco ICT / Training & Development / Registered Providers	Housing Needs Operations Manager	July 2018
6	Bringing together services to work holistically in ensuring financial inclusion, income maximisation and debt advice are accessible and prioritised in order to support preventative work	Investigate the co-location of Housing Needs, CAB advice, Benefits/Welfare Advice and set up effective referral processes to enable priority access to those who may be at risk of homelessness	Co-located prevention hub, one stop shop around homelessness prevention	CAB / Serco ICT / Property Services	Assistant Director for Housing , Communities & Youth / Head of Housing Needs / Senior Policy Manager	September 2018
		Review current admin and decision making in relation to the DHP fund and consider locating within the Housing Needs team.	Decisions for DHP made based on prevention of homelessness	STS Client Team / Serco Revs & Bens	Head of Housing Needs / Senior Policy Manager	July 2018
		Investigate the benefits of the creation of a homelessness prevention hub drawing in a number of other service partners from the faith and voluntary sector to ensure a holistic approach to prevention	Co-located prevention hub, one stop shop around homelessness prevention	CAB / Serco Revs & Bens / Commissioning Team	Assistant Director for Housing , Communities & Youth / Head of Housing Needs / Senior Policy Manager	March 2019

		Develop effective referral pathways ensuring that identified vulnerable groups are able to access services at the earliest opportunity and personalised action plans effectively support prevention and move on.	Individual pathways set up	Prisons / Armed Forces / NHS Hospitals / Leaving Care Teams / Housing Association Partners	Head of Housing Needs / Housing Needs Operations Managers / Senior Policy Manager	October 2018
7	Explore the potential of a Social Lettings Agency/Guaranteed Rent Scheme for private landlords	Investigate the benefits of the creation of a social letting agency, offering services to landlords in the private sector enabling the increase of supply of accommodation for households in housing need.	Increase the supply of accommodation for households in housing need	Private Landlords / Commissioning Team	Head of Housing Needs / Director of Commissioning / Empty Homes	September 2018
		Assuming viability create a business model demonstrating benefits and identifying resource requirements and seek approvals for creation	Increase the supply of accommodation for households in housing need	Private Landlords / Commissioning Team	Head of Housing Needs / Director of Commissioning / Empty Homes	October 2018
		Formulate a package offer for landlords giving a suite of options, which best fits their individual needs, but ensure access to accommodation in the private sector who might currently struggle.	Increase the supply of accommodation for households in housing need	Private Landlords / Commissioning Team	Head of Housing Needs / Director of Commissioning / Empty Homes	November 2018
		Set up scheme and roll out	Increase the supply of accommodation for households in housing need	Private Landlords / Commissioning Team	Head of Housing Needs / Director of Commissioning / Empty Homes	April 2019

8	Ensure that information and advice on housing and homelessness prevention is widely available and that our customers are seen at the earliest possible opportunity	In reviewing the customer journey ensure that customers are able to access preventative support at the earliest opportunity	Early intervention opportunities maximised	Media - Comms Team / Serco – Front Door	Head of Housing / Housing Needs Operations Manager	October 2018
		Review current web based information and ensure comprehensive information is available around all aspects of the service to enable clients to self-help where needed, but being careful not to discourage contact where essential	Pages to be fully updated and reviewed regularly so remaining current to reduce unnecessary contact with the service. Facility for clients to self-refer via web form.	Media - Comms Team	Head of Housing / Housing Needs Operations Manager	October 2018
		Ensure that other Council departments/ Partners and Members are briefed on the warning signs of homeless and encouraged to refer clients into the service where a risk of homelessness is evident.	Early intervention opportunities maximised	All relevant Council Departments / Members Services / Partners	Head of Housing Needs / Housing Needs Operations Manager	December 2018
9	Maintain services and create an effective supported accommodation pathway for single homeless and rough sleepers	Continue to review the work of the council and its partners as part of the rough sleeping strategic group to achieve the recommendations of the cross party task and finish group around rough sleeping	Ensuring rough sleepers are supported with an offer to leave the streets	Rough Sleeper Strategic Group	Head of Housing Needs	April 2018
		Maintain current resource levels around rough sleeping to support our ambitions to reduce rough sleeping	Ensuring rough sleepers are supported with an offer to leave the streets		Assistant Director for Housing , Communities & Youth / Head of Housing Needs	Ongoing

		Create and take the lead role in a supported accommodation pathway for single homeless persons, ensuring effective management of supported accommodation resource.	Ensuring effective use of supported accommodation provision and move on	Supported Accommodation Providers / Housing Programmes	Housing Needs Operations Manager	January 2019
		Work with the Councils Prevention & Enforcement service to ensure that effective enforcement action is being taken to tackle street based activity, often confused with rough sleeping.	Address the prevalent issue of begging & street drinking, which is not always associated with rough sleeping	Prevention & Enforcement Service	Head of Housing Needs	October 2018
10	Increase the focus on performance supported by clearer data	Measure the performance of officers on outcomes in relation to homelessness prevention rather than timescales to process to ensure high quality of casework	Officers have clear direction		Head of Housing Needs / Housing Needs Operations Manager / Housing Systems & Performance Officer	August 2018
		Create monitoring systems which can provide live feedback on cases to reduce delays in processing due to information hunting	Supporting efficient processing of applications / allocations	Serco ICT	Head of Housing Needs / Housing Needs Operations Manager / Housing Systems & Performance Officer	January 2019
		Produce an effective relevant list of key performance indicators (KPI) in relation to homelessness and homelessness prevention	Effective relevant reporting		Head of Housing Needs / Housing Needs Operations Manager / Housing Systems & Performance Officer	April 2018