

ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 7
15th JANUARY 2019	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	Adrian Chapman, Service Director, Communities and Safety	
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Cllr Peter Hiller, Cabinet Member for Growth, Planning Services, Housing and Economic Development Cllr Irene Walsh, Cabinet Member for Communities	
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REVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION STRATEGY 2018 - 2020 AND SAFER OFF THE STREETS

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S	
FROM: Head of Housing Needs	Deadline date: <i>n/a</i>
<p>It is recommended that Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the progress of Peterborough City Council and partners in the delivery of the Homelessness Reduction Strategy 2018 - 2020 2. Note the progress in tackling rough sleeping in the City since the launch of Safer Off the Streets in October 2018 3. Provide comment and steer for the revision of the Action Plan, and agree to the provision of a revised action plan in March 2019 4. Consider and agree to the process and timescales for reviewing the new Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleepers Strategy 2020 - 2025 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 The Committee have requested a review of progress in delivering the City Council's Homelessness Reduction Strategy 2018 - 2020, which was launched in June 2018 following agreement at Full Council. The committee have also requested an update on the delivery of the Safer Off the Streets campaign, launched in October 2018.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 Full Council agreed the two year Homelessness Reduction Strategy in June 2018, which is due to be renewed by March 2020. Homelessness is a significant issue in the City, and since the strategy was written, the Homelessness Reduction Act has placed new burdens on the local authority from April 2018. Incorporated into this report is an update on the progress of the Safer Off the Streets Partnership which was launched in October 2018.

It was agreed by Members that the strategy would be reviewed annually. Given the significance of the changes, it is timely to review early progress, priorities and the action plan, and also start to set out a schedule of work for developing a new 5 year strategy from March 2020. This report constitutes the annual report to Committee on progress against the strategy.

2.2 This report is for the Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee to consider under its Terms

of Reference Part 3, Section 4 - Overview and Scrutiny Functions, paragraph No. 2.1 Functions determined by Council:

3. Housing need (including homelessness, housing options and selective licensing).

- 2.3 This report links to the following corporate priorities:
- Keeping our communities safe, cohesive and healthy
 - Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	n/a
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4 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The City Council is required under the Homelessness Act 2002 to conduct a review of homelessness in its area and produce a Homelessness Reduction Strategy every five years which:
- Addresses the causes of homelessness in the Council’s area
 - Introduces initiatives to prevent homelessness wherever possible
 - Ensures measures are in place to secure sufficient temporary accommodation for those households that are or may become homeless; and
 - Ensures that appropriate support is available for people who have previously experienced homelessness in order to prevent it happening again.

These legislative requirements were refined in the 2018 Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) which increases the duty on Local Authorities to support households earlier in order to prevent homelessness. The current Strategy was purposefully created for a shorter time period in order to allow the initial impact of the new legislation to be understood, and for the Council to be able to respond to future needs without delay.

- 4.2 Peterborough City Council has recognised in its current strategy the impact which homelessness has on people. The strategy also highlights the current system wide pressures which have caused a rapid escalation of the issue in the last three years, and the changing economic environment which has compounded them. The Council is clear about the areas where most progress needs to be made in order to make a positive impact which are captured in the following ten objectives, with more detail to be found in Appendix One about progress against these 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 (HRA) 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 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

4.3 To support the delivery of the strategy the Council has continued to make a significant investment in staff and homes in order to address what is both a local and national issue. The Council has been supported in this through additional investment from national government in key areas of service delivery, including rough sleeping and the new prevention duties.

This report sets out progress against these objectives, highlighting areas of improvement as well as where there remain challenges.

4.4 As part of the strategy delivery, the City Council has also acted as a key partner in the development and delivery of the Safer Off the Streets campaign which was launched in October 2018. This supports the delivery of one of the key priorities identified in 4.2.

4.5 Critical to delivering reductions in the numbers of people who are homeless in the City is managing demand through preventative work, but also ensuring there is a sufficient supply of the right type and cost of accommodation to meet need. Sections 5.1 - 5.8 set out how this work has been developed in the last 12 months.

5 **KEY ISSUES:**

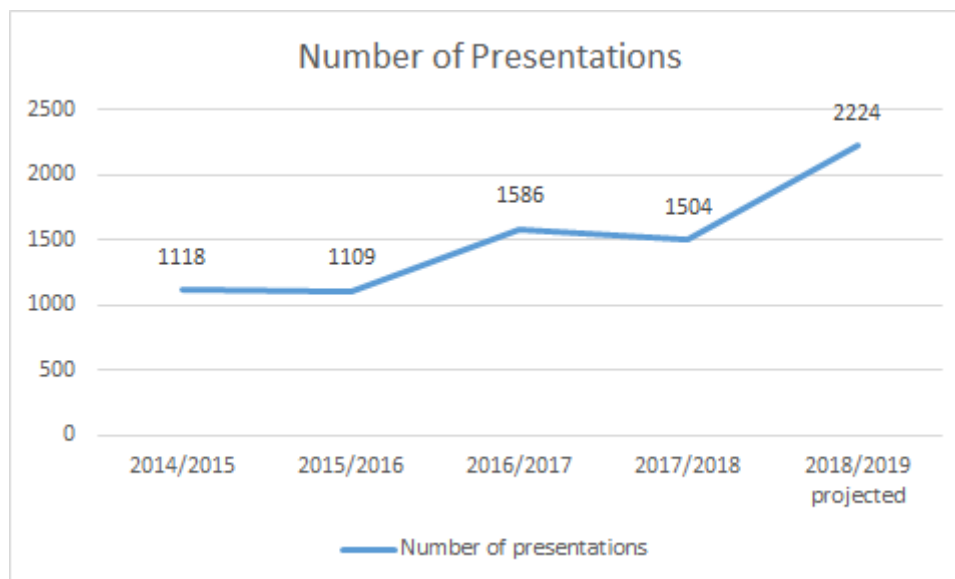
5.1 **Demand 2018/19**

As reported in the update to committee in July, the 2 years prior had been particularly challenging for the Housing Needs Team. In the period April 2016 - March 2017 the Council saw increasing levels of households requiring assistance, with 1586 presenting as being homeless or threatened with homelessness. This represented an increase of 43% on the previous year. This level of demand remained between April 2017 - March 2018 with 1504 households presenting as homeless.

We expected that there would also be an increase in demand for services this year as a result of the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act. The experiences of Southwark, who were an early adopter of the Homelessness Reduction Act, saw an increase in presentations for assistance of 26% in the first year.

In addition to this we have seen the further roll out of Universal Credit in the area and we were expecting to see a further increase in demand because of this.

So far to date we have seen 1668 presentations in the 9 months since the introduction of the Act. If this level of presentations is to continue we expect this to represent a 47.8% increase this year on last years figures, as detailed in the graph below:



The change in legislation has been a significant pressure on the Housing Needs team and they have often found it difficult, not least coping with the increases in demand, but also the change in culture required as the way households are dealt with is different under the new legislation.

This being said the team have made great strides in embracing the new duties and have seen success in relation to the prevention and relief of homelessness. In the 9 months since the introduction of the Act the team have been successful in preventing or relieving homelessness for 245 households. Many of these households would have been able to remain in their current accommodation following the intervention and support of the team or have been supported with a move to alternative suitable accommodation without a lengthy stay in temporary accommodation and a full housing duty being accepted.

5.2 Temporary Accommodation

The increases in demand for temporary accommodation that the service has experienced have been widely reported in the media, in particular the number of households accommodated out of Peterborough. These increases have been particularly marked since the introduction of the Act.

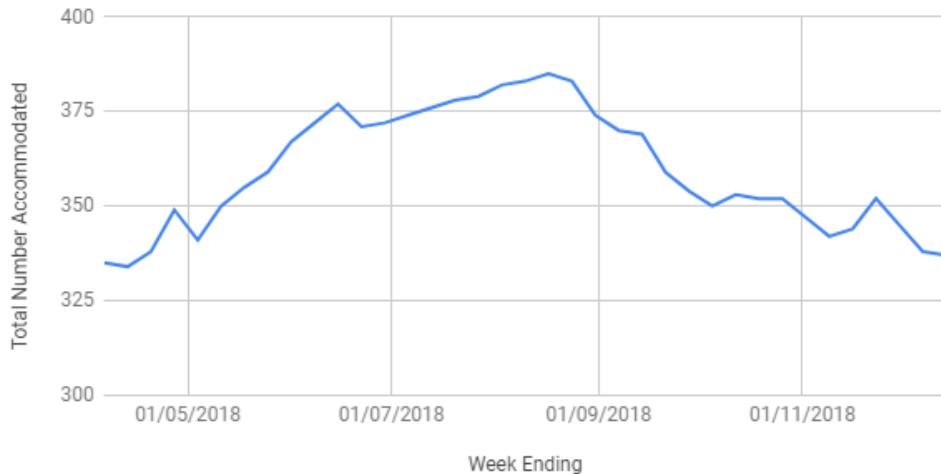
However, the team has seen successes in the management of the number of households accommodated in temporary accommodation and have now brought those numbers down to a similar level to where they were at the start of this financial year. These figures continue on a downward trajectory.

At the start of the financial year we were accommodating 335 households in temporary accommodation, this peaked in August when we were accommodating 385 households, but at the end of December 2018 we were accommodating 337 households.

As importantly, the introduction of new accommodation for use by the Council in Peterborough has meant that we have been able to reduce the the number of households accommodated in Travelodge accommodation outside of Peterborough to zero before the end of the year. This peaked at 63 households in June 2018.

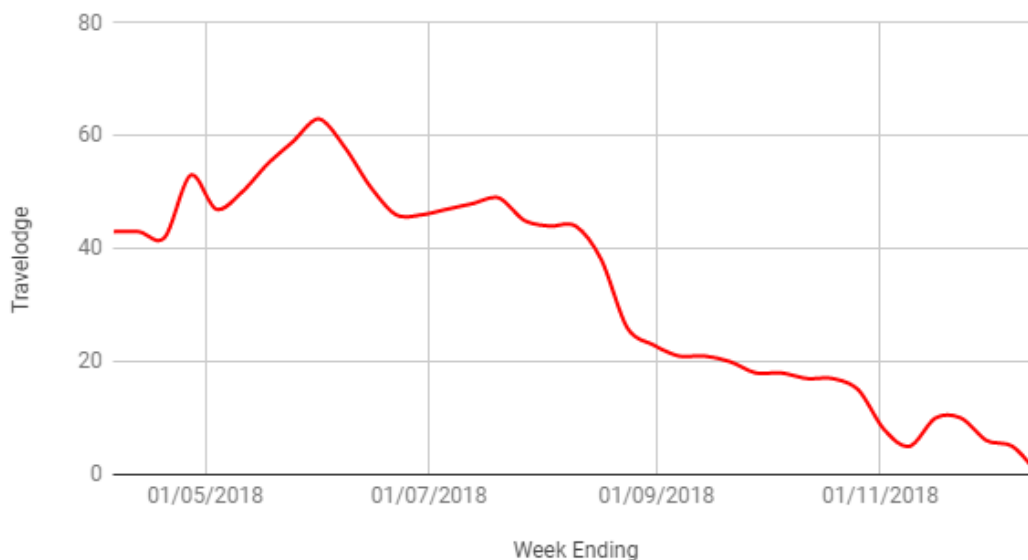
The graph below shows the number of households accommodated in temporary accommodation:

Total Number of Households Accommodated in Temporary Accommodation



The graph below shows the number of households accommodated in Travelodge accommodation this year to date:

Number of households accommodated in Travelodge



5.3 Supply 2018/19 - update on plans to increase supply of accommodation within the city

The Council has been pursuing three strands of activity to increase the supply of affordable accommodation to meet the needs of homeless households. The first concerns the supply of new affordable homes via Medesham Homes, the Council’s joint venture with Cross Keys Homes. Medesham Homes has a development pipeline of c.250 units of accommodation that it will deliver over the next 2 years. This is summarised in appendix 2. The first scheme of 29 units has now been completed at Midland Road and these properties became available for occupation in December 2018.

Council Officers have also been pursuing the leasing of properties from private sector landlords for periods typically of up to 5 years. 35 housing units have been secured to date. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has announced funding for private rented sector leasing initiatives that would allow local authorities to adopt new incentives such as rent deposit guarantees. Council Officers have submitted a bid for this funding and a decision is expected to be known in January.

Preparatory work requires to be undertaken to ready privately leased properties for occupation ensuring that electrical and gas safety inspections and essential due diligence checks have been completed. Once the outcome of the MHCLG funding bid is known it is proposed that a more formally structured private rented sector scheme will be introduced with a view to further reducing the number of homeless households in B&B accommodation.

In addition to leasing properties from landlords, the Council has used £10m invest to save funding to purchase a number of private properties for use as temporary accommodation, in particular, 2 and 3 bedroom units to address demand from homeless families. As at 18 December, offers had been accepted for 36 properties. These are progressing towards exchange of contracts and the first 4 were occupied before Christmas. It is expected that around 50 homes will have been acquired by March 2019. There is a typical lag of 8 -10 weeks from acceptance of offer to completion and, in some cases, preparatory work is needed before homes can be occupied.

The full benefits of the 50 or so properties purchased through invest to save money will be realised in the new financial year but already the use of leased and purchased properties has helped reduce the number of households accommodated in B&B and, as previously described, as at 18 December there were no longer any households in Travelodge accommodation.

The Council has also purchased 7 properties on Cromwell Road as part of its land assembly preparations for the regeneration of North Westgate. It is intended that until development commences at North Westgate these properties will be used for temporary accommodation.

5.4 By the end of 2018/19 it is anticipated that an additional supply of temporary housing will have been delivered as follows.

- Medesham Homes 29 units
- Private leased properties 50 units
- Purchased Properties 53 units

5.5 The measures described above have had a positive impact in reducing the Council's reliance on Travelodge and B&B accommodation. There were no households in Travelodges, or out of area, as of 18th December 2018. This is a significant achievement given that numbers peaked in June this year at 63. Provided there is no major increase in homeless demand the measures taken should deliver significant further improvements in the new financial year. However one remaining concern is the risk of rent arrears rising with the further roll out of Universal Credit. The Council's work on homelessness prevention has largely mitigated this risk to date but it remains an area of concern.

5.6 Implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA)

5.6.1 The implementation of the HRA since April 2018, as indicated by the figures above, has had an impact on demands into the service which was anticipated. To meet this demand, new resources have been put into the Housing Needs team to increase capacity in our preventative activity, and thereby reduce the costly and unsatisfactory use of temporary accommodation. Following a whole service consultation, the new team structure was in place by September 2018. Given the dramatic legislative changes, the new structure will need to be kept under review as the full impact of the HRA and operational requirements become clearer in the first twelve months. However, having a new and established senior management team in place is already improving oversight and operational and strategic capacity.

- 5.6.2 A key aspect of the delivery of the HRA is the strength and capacity of partnership work. Homelessness is a multi-faceted and systemic problem which needs to have systemic partnership wide response in order to make an impact. To facilitate the wider partnership work, a Peterborough Homelessness Forum has been set up, with its inaugural meeting taking place in October where a wide range of internal and external partner organisations and services were represented. From the first meeting, a number of pressing priorities have been identified to be taken forward in more detail across the partnership: our work with families with children; working with victims of domestic abuse; dual diagnosis support (where people have mental health and substance misuse issues); and communications. The working groups will be reporting back with early recommendations at the second of the Forum meetings in January 2019.
- 5.6.3 Work has been taking place in close and successful partnership with Cross Keys Homes in order to address the demand needs. This has included focusing jointly on activity to bring households who have been placed out of area back into Peterborough, and will continue into 2019 on one of our key priorities to reduce use of bed and breakfast accommodation significantly.
- 5.6.4 In addition to the above, the City Council is piloting a new and innovative partnership with the voluntary sector which will enhance preventative action before households get involved with the statutory housing needs team. This will increase the capacity of the partnership to intervene effectively before problems become a crisis. Once the new Housing Needs office opens on Bridge Street, which is anticipated to be from February 2019, we will be exploring longer term options for the co-location of services to complement the statutory work of the Council.

5.7 Performance

5.7.1 *Homelessness Advice and Support Team (HAST) - Improvement Plan*

The significant issues which Peterborough has been experiencing in the last two years with an exponential rise in homelessness and a consequential increased use of B&B type accommodation to meet demand for temporary accommodation, has enabled us to access further support from the national team leading on homelessness. The HAST team form part of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and after their first visit to the City in Autumn 2017, they have returned three times in Autumn 2018 to discuss our progress and offer further advice and support. There has been recognition of the challenges Peterborough has in tackling the issue, but also very supportive feedback of the work underway and the strengths and capabilities of the Housing Needs team.

Gaining the external view of where further improvements need to be made has been extremely helpful and as a result of the work with HAST an internal improvement plan has been developed, and work is well underway to deliver against it. This will be aligned fully with the refreshed Homelessness Reduction Action Plan by March 2019.

5.7.2 *Governance*

As this report highlights, reducing the numbers of people in the City who find themselves homeless, is a complex problem which requires a whole system approach to achieve. Within the Council there is a need to both secure the optimum arrangements to prevent homelessness, and also ensure there is a sufficient supply of homes to meet the right type of need. To ensure complete connectivity and senior management oversight of the work across the Council, a number of governance arrangements are in place at officer level:

- The production of a weekly briefing note which updates on progress in demand and supply
- A weekly meeting between the Leader and Chief Executive of the City Council, and the lead officers for demand and supply activities
- the establishment of a Housing Programme Board which meets monthly, provides oversight of the financial position, and works to unblock any barriers to progress where

needed, ensuring risks are managed securely. This is chaired by a Service Director.

5.8 Safer Off the Streets

5.8.1 In October 2018, we provided an update to Committee regarding the forming of the Safer off the Streets Peterborough initiative.

Much has happened since the launch, which took place in Cathedral Square on the 10th October 2018. This was also the same week that the Garden House was opened by the Light Project Peterborough in the Cathedral Precincts.

Since opening, the Garden House has provided a neutral welcoming environment for rough sleepers to access:

- the Council's outreach services
- Primary Health Care, through GP provision
- drug and alcohol outreach
- assistance with claiming and maintaining benefits
- volunteering opportunities
- and much more

In addition to the opening of the Garden House, Axiom Housing Association have opened up access to the city's crash bed provision. This consists of 10 emergency access beds that the outreach team can refer rough sleepers into to provide them with warmth and shelter at any time throughout the year. The crash beds are providing the perfect launch pad for clients to engage with outreach support services in order to make that next move into some form of more stable accommodation provision.

Once accommodation provision is sourced we now have floating support workers working as part of the rough sleeping initiative funding who then keep contact with clients and support them in the early stages of them managing their new accommodation to ensure that they are able to maintain the accommodation and break the cycle of homelessness and rough sleeping that can affect so many.

In addition to the above, in the last week of November, the Light Project Peterborough opened the winter night shelter, which will run until April 2019 offering room for 8 rough sleepers at any one time. The Council and partners supports the move on of clients from the Winter Night Shelter into supported accommodation settings ensuring that no one who's eligible for assistance leaves the night shelter and returns to the streets.

Over the Christmas period the Council opened up its Severe Weather Emergency Provision, which increased the capacity even further and meant that there are 18 beds available for rough sleepers at Fairview Court and additional capacity in reserve if required to ensure that no one has to sleep rough over the winter period.

The Safer off the Streets website (www.saferoffthestreets.co.uk) has launched and continues to be updated regularly to include what help and support is available in the city and when it can be accessed. Case studies are regularly added to give updates on the progress being made by the partnership.

The initiative also provides members of the public with an alternative to giving money to people on the streets. The contactless donation point in St Peters Arcade and through the website allows the public to donate directly to the services who will support those individuals to make the change required to leave the streets.

The Safer Off The Streets management board have agreed that all donations received will go directly towards the day to day operating costs of the Garden House.

The annual rough sleeper count took place late in November 2018 and our estimate based on

the physical count and other intelligence gathered was that 28 rough sleepers were sleeping out on the night of the snapshot. This is down from 31 last year. At the time of the physical count there were still a number of the crash beds going unused as the weather was unseasonably mild and many were still choosing to remain sleeping out.

It is expected that nationally the number of rough sleepers is likely to increase, but figures will not be released until the early new year.

There is still much work to be done and in 2019 the Council will have increased resource focussing on rough sleeping. The outreach team will increase to 4 outreach officers and a team leader. The accommodation provision we currently have will be maintained to ensure that we have an offer for all rough sleepers to leave the streets. The Safer Off The Streets partnership continues to grow and working together collaboratively will ensure that areas of duplication are minimised while harnessing the high levels of good will we have in the city.

5.9 Process and Timescales for Review of Strategy for 2020 - 2025

Given the significant changes which have taken place with the new legislation, Members chose to make the current strategy of two year duration. As such the strategy and action plan is due to be reviewed and republished by July 2020, which will also provide the opportunity to reflect new national guidance which indicates that Homelessness Reduction Strategies need to more visibly include the needs of rough sleepers. The following sets out a proposed timescale for the review, for comment by Members:

- Mid year review of Action Plan, to incorporate improvement plan: March 2019
- Partnership review - led by Homelessness Forum: September - December 2019
- City Council review - led by Housing Programme Board: September - December 2019
- Revised draft objectives and high level actions presented to Members for comment - January 2020. This could be undertaken in the form of a workshop in order to develop ideas further
- Detailed final draft of strategy and action plan presented to Scrutiny - March 2020
- Cabinet approval sought - March - June 2020
- Full Council adopt strategy - June/July 2020

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 The report describes the ways in which we are engaging with our partners across the housing, voluntary and faith sectors to ensure our actions address the issue of homelessness and rough sleeping. These consultative mechanisms are now fully embedded and will continue, including during the development phases of the new strategy.

7. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

7.1 The scrutiny applied by the Committee will help to ensure we continue to drive down homelessness and rough sleeping.

8. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

8.1 The recommendations contained within this report will ensure that we have an agreed process in place to consult upon, design and deliver the new 5 years strategy, as well as to continue to deliver the current strategy.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 N/A

10. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

10.1 It is not expected that there will be any additional financial implications beyond those already accounted and budgeted for.

The Housing Needs Budget for 2018/19 is £2.44m. The forecast spend at the end of November 2018 was £2.55m.

Legal Implications

10.2 N/A

Equalities Implications

10.3 N/A

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

11.1 Peterborough's Homelessness Reduction Strategy 2018 - 2020

12. APPENDICES

12.1 Appendix 1 - Homelessness Strategy Action Plan Update - December 2018