

**NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL DECISION**

**DECISION OF: COUNCILLOR DON DAVIES LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

**WITH ADVICE FROM: DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES  
DIRECTORATE: PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES  
DECISION NO: PC82 2019/20 SCHEME**



**SUBJECT: NORTH SOMERSET PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2019**

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**KEY DECISION: YES**

**REASON: Affects more than two Wards**

**BACKGROUND:**

The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-24 (PHRSS), updates and replaces the current Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2017-22 (PHS) and sets out how the council will work, together with partners, to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping over the next five years. It includes a more detailed approach to our rough sleeping interventions and emphasises our commitment to the government's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018, to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and to end it for good by 2027. The draft strategy also highlights the way our homelessness services have changed, after the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

The PHRSS is regarded as a delivery plan for an important strand of our Housing Strategy and its' successful delivery will contribute to delivering the council's Housing Strategy and new Corporate Plan.

The PHRSS includes an action plan, the priorities of which are supported by evidence and consultation from our Homelessness Review. The 47 actions are under our four key priorities of: Preventing Homelessness, Ending Rough Sleeping, Supporting Vulnerable Households, Increasing Supply of Affordable Housing. The PHRSS and its' action plan are live, evolving documents and will be reviewed and updated throughout the lifetime of the strategy.

A published full version with document formatting and design will be undertaken following adoption.

**DECISION:**

1. To approve the Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2019 -24 for publication and implementation as set out at Annex A;

2. To delegate authority to the Head of Housing and Strategy to make any required presentational changes to the strategy and its supporting documents prior to publication and to agree regular updates; in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

#### **REASONS:**

Producing a homelessness strategy that is informed by a review of homelessness in the district, is a statutory requirement for the council under the Homelessness Act 2002. Although the Act requires that a review of the strategy is carried out every five years, in December 2018 the Government published its Rough Sleeping Strategy Delivery Plan that gave a commitment for all local authorities to update their existing homelessness strategies and rebadge them as Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies by the winter of 2019.

#### **OPTIONS CONSIDERED:**

Not developing a homelessness strategy would mean that the Council will fail to meet the requirements of the governments' commitment under the Rough Sleeping Strategy and the opportunity to update our strategy to better meet the needs of homeless people would be lost.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

No specific resource implications - the delivery of the PHRSS will be delivered within agreed budgets. The implementation of the action plan will ensure that resources are used efficiently by targeting those actions identified as having the highest priority in the light of the Homelessness Review.

Time limited Government funding received by the council for homelessness services in North Somerset in 2019/20 amounts to approximately £600k. Positive outcomes from the anticipated national 3-year comprehensive spending review will therefore be critical in enabling the council to deliver this Strategy.

#### **LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS**

The Council have a legal duty to produce a Homelessness Strategy under the Homelessness Act 2002

#### **CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There will be no direct impact the on Council or our partners in mitigating climate change

#### **CONSULTATION**

Extensive consultation with stakeholders and staff informed our current PHS in 2017, including: The Housing and Homelessness Prevention Forum; the Adult Services and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Panel; e-consultation via the 'have your say' web page on the NSC web site; and recommendations from an NSC People and Communities Board Appreciative Enquiry.

The new draft strategy is an update and rebadge of the existing PHS and therefore, consultation has been kept relatively light touch. An e-consultation was carried out in October 2019, and in addition we consulted with all of our key stakeholders, including members of, and organisations connected with, the Single and Street Homeless Partnership (which covers

a wide spectrum of individuals and organisations connected with homelessness from the voluntary sector, faith groups and other partner agencies), registered providers of social housing, Town and Parish councils and NSC ward members.

The purpose of the consultation exercise was to obtain feedback and comments about the draft strategy, that could help the final strategy meet its aim to:

***'Prevent homelessness and eradicate rough sleeping in North Somerset, by working together in partnership to meet the housing and broader needs of those who are at risk or are already homeless'***

The results of the e-consultation were considered by the councils' Adult Services and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Panel and the Strategy was updated in light of their comments.

The full results of the consultation are included in the appendices of the PHRSS.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT**

There is a risk that the strategy does not achieve the outcomes sought - this is assessed as a low risk as the strategy action plan will be regularly reviewed and updated,

## **EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

Have you completed an Equalities Impact Assessment? (Y)

The implementation of this strategy will result in the provision of services that better meet the needs of homeless people and as a result will have a positive impact on a range of people with protected characteristics. In particular disabled people, people from ethnic different groups, women, younger people, women who are pregnant and carers and parents as these groups are over represented amongst homeless households

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

The PHRSS is regarded as a delivery plan for an important strand of our Housing Strategy and its' successful delivery will contribute to delivering the council's Housing Strategy and new Corporate Plan.

## **APPENDICES**

Annex A: Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-24 (includes Foreword, Main Document, Action Plan and other appendices);

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2017-21

<https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/preventing-homelessness-strategy-2017-22.pdf>

SIGNATORIES:

DECISION MAKER(S):

Signed: .....  


Title: Leader of the Council

Date: ..... 8.1.20 .....

WITH ADVICE FROM:

Signed: Sheila Dhillon .....

Title: Director of People and Communities

Date: ..... 8.1.20 .....

**Footnote: Details of changes made and agreed by the decision taker since publication of the proposed (pre-signed) decision notice, if applicable:**

**North Somerset Council**

**Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy  
2019 - 2024**

**A Partnership Approach**



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**North Somerset Council**

**Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy**

**2019 – 2024**

## **Foreword**

I am pleased to introduce the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy for 2019-24.

This is an updated and re-badged version of our Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2017-21, that shows how we and our partner organisations, will continue to build on its' success, to deliver services and interventions that focus on the prevention and relief of homelessness and rough sleeping in our district, for the next five years.

I would like to thank the many different organisations who have worked with us to develop this shared understanding of the issues we face in North Somerset. It is important to recognise our successes have only been achieved with their help and support – whether they are from the voluntary sector, faith-based groups or other agencies – and that this success has become more challenging to deliver over time due, in part, to increasing pressures on local authority funding and increasing housing costs.

Despite this, we remain committed to reducing all forms of homelessness, so our updated strategy is linked to four main priorities of: Preventing Homelessness; Ending Rough Sleeping; Supporting Vulnerable Households; Increasing the Supply of Affordable Housing; and within these priorities, we have identified 47 separate actions for ourselves and our partners, that aim to deliver continuous improvement and impact positively on the lives of vulnerable people in North Somerset.

**Cllr Donald Davies**

**Leader of the Council**



## Executive Summary

The Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-24 (PHRSS), updates and replaces the current Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2017-22 (PHS) and sets out how the council will work, together with partners, to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping over the next five years. It includes a more detailed approach to our rough sleeping interventions and emphasises our commitment to the government's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018, to '**halve rough sleeping by 2022 and to end it for good by 2027**', and highlights the way our homelessness services have changed, after the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

The strategy includes the findings from our Homelessness Review, our analysis of these findings and the results of the light touch consultation that we carried out.

The PHRSS includes the following:

- A section that sets the local and national context;
- Key achievements from the last homelessness strategy (2017-21);
- Emphasis on the importance of our Partnership Approach;
- Our four priorities for preventing homelessness and rough sleeping;
- Details of consultation undertaken to date;
- The PHS Action Plan for 2019 -24

### Homelessness Review Findings

The PHS is informed by evidence from the Homelessness Review (HMR). The HMR is a longer, more technical document and has pulled together information we (or partners) hold about homelessness in North Somerset. There are details about resources and relevant, related areas of activity and services. It provides an analysis of this information, sets out the key issues for the PHRSS and the responses from our recent consultation.

## Introduction and Vision

This Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out how we will work together with partners to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping over the next five years.

It replaces the 2017 Preventing Homelessness Strategy and includes a more detailed approach to our rough sleeping interventions and how prevention and homelessness services have changed since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The Strategy is supported by an updated Homelessness Review document, that is attached at Appendix 1 and contains details of homelessness statistics in North Somerset.

**Our vision is to:**

***Prevent homelessness and eradicate rough sleeping in North Somerset, by working together in partnership to meet the housing and broader needs of those at risk or already homeless.***

Our key aim is to ensure this strategy is an easy to read document with the emphasis on delivering high quality homelessness prevention and rough sleeping services and achieving effective outcomes from our action plan.

Our actions cover the following four priorities:

- **Preventing Homelessness**
- **Ending Rough Sleeping**
- **Supporting vulnerable households**
- **Increasing the supply of affordable housing**

Delivering services and interventions to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping cannot be achieved without the support of our partners – those in the voluntary sector, faith groups and other partner agencies. This Strategy reflects our joint working through a multi-partnership action plan to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping.

The Action Plan that supports this Strategy can be found at Appendix 2 and sets out the actions that the council and its' partners will take together with details of the lead services/organisations and timescales.

# Context

## National Policy

The Government has acknowledged the rise in homelessness as a key issue and has outlined its commitment to homelessness by introducing legislative changes, strategies and funding to help with prevention and those already homeless.

### The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act introduced new legislation to prevent homelessness for households and individuals at risk through the following clauses:

- Improved advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness, tailored to individual need and accessible;
- Extension of the period at which an individual may be considered as 'threatened with homelessness,' from 28 days to 56 days;
- Introduced new duties to prevent and relieve homelessness for eligible people, regardless of priority need, local connection or whether they have become homeless intentionally;
- Introduced needs assessments and personalised housing plans, setting out the actions housing authorities and individuals will take to help secure accommodation;
- Encouraging public bodies to work together to prevent and relieve homelessness through a mandatory 'duty to refer';

### Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018

In addition to policies to prevent homelessness through the Homelessness Reduction Act, commitment is further emphasised through the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy 2018 which committed to:

- Halve rough sleeping by 2022 and to end it for good by 2027;
- £100m of funding and a three-pronged approach to ending rough sleeping through prevention, intervention, and recovery;
- A wider review of homelessness and rough sleeping legislation, which will include the Vagrancy Act;

### Duty to Refer 2018

A new Duty to Refer has been introduced and applies to public sector organisations to refer anyone who they believe may be homeless or at risk to the local authority for assistance with housing needs. This recognises that other organisations have a responsibility for preventing homelessness by making timely referrals.

The duty to refer will help to ensure that services are working together effectively to prevent homelessness by ensuring that peoples' housing needs are considered when they are in contact with other public authorities. It is also anticipated that it will

encourage local housing authorities and other public authorities to build strong partnerships which enable them to work together to intervene earlier to prevent homelessness through, increasingly integrated services.

We continue to build upon our existing partnerships to tackle homelessness and the Duty to Refer system is being used here in North Somerset and already we have seen an increase in referrals.

## **Local Policy**

Our Housing Strategy 2016 – 2021 gives a broad overview on how the Council aims to meet housing needs and outlines how our strategies and plans link together. It has the following ambitions:

- **Increasing the Supply of Homes**
- **Improving Homes**
- **Providing Housing Solutions**

(Full details of the Housing Strategy ambitions can be found at <https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/26409-Housing-Strategy-FINAL.pdf> )

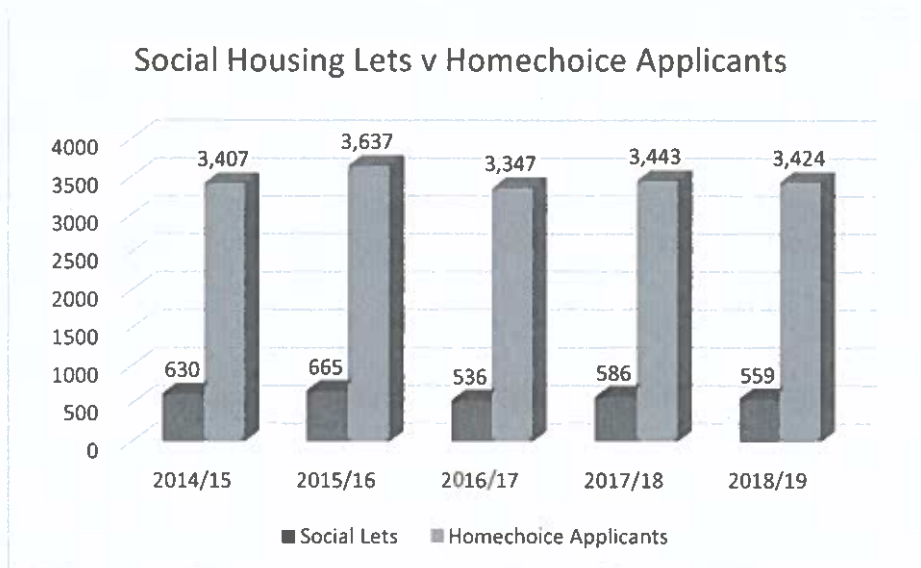
These reflect our commitment and approach to prevent homelessness wherever possible and assist and support those homeless or in housing need. It complements this new Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

Both strategies are linked to the Council's Corporate Plan which is currently being renewed to reflect the Council's new political administration's vision for the communities of North Somerset. Key statistics from our updated Homelessness Review evidence base can be found later in this section – highlighted below are some of the challenges we face.

# Local Challenges

## Housing Supply

A lack of affordable and settled housing contributes to our homelessness numbers. While the numbers of applicants on the councils housing register has remained constant during the last 5 years, we have a growing demand because the number of social housing lets that have become available has been decreasing during this period.



There is limited availability of private rented sector (PRS) accommodation that is both affordable i.e. at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) level and of good quality. We continue to see rent rises in this sector and the team who try to secure PRS accommodation for those in need, often find landlords wanting market rents.

## Health and Well-Being

Some households have complex needs that require support to sustain a tenancy and help with their needs. It is becoming increasingly more difficult, to find suitable accommodation for these households as they are perceived to be more of a risk by housing providers in the private rented and social sectors, even where tenancy support can be accessed.

Substance misuse and mental health are the main complex needs of those facing homelessness or the threat of homelessness. It is often difficult to access services and non-engagement with current services is a factor. We will continue to work closely with colleagues in health to look at joint initiatives to support those in need and how we can increase engagement.

## **Affordability**

Affordability is a real issue and for some groups, such as single households under 35, larger households and/or those on low incomes who are particularly affected by the lack of affordable supply and the rising costs of housing. This causes problems in both accessing PRS housing and social housing (including some temporary accommodation) as the difference between LHA and the rent is often unaffordable in the long term, even with initial support from a Discretionary Housing Payment.

## **Welfare Reform**

The impact of welfare benefit reforms has been highlighted in our previous strategies and the sustained period of benefits being frozen or having limited increases (well below the level of inflation) continues to impact a household's ability to budget for essential expenditure. Universal Credit has had a huge impact on household finances particularly as a result of delays in payments and those taking a payment in advance, finding they cannot budget once the repayment is deducted.

## **Funding Uncertainty**

Extra funding from Government for Homelessness Prevention Services is often time limited, for example, the recent successful bids to the Rough Sleeper Initiative and Rapid Rehousing Pathway funding streams were for 12 months only – meaning initiatives are just getting off the ground, before funding runs out and we have experienced difficulties in recruitment, due to the uncertainty of fixed term contracts. Time limited Government funding received by the council for homelessness services in North Somerset in 2019/20 amounts to approximately £600k.

There are funding pressures elsewhere, for example, for housing related support which has seen reductions over the years.

Positive outcomes from the anticipated national 3-year comprehensive spending review will therefore be critical in enabling the council to deliver this Strategy.

The Homelessness Review Key Facts section below will highlight some of the areas above and their impact on homelessness numbers.

## Homelessness Review – Key Facts

Here are some of the key facts that have emerged as part of our review of homelessness in the district. Some of them reflect the issues that have arisen since the last Homelessness Strategy was published but prior to the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018 and others that have become apparent following the implementation of the Act. Irrespective of whether the facts relate to pre or post HRA data, they will jointly help inform our Action Plan.

Future reviews, however, will be informed by comparison with the HRA data only.

*(the section below will be graphically enhanced for final publication)*

- Number of cases able to remain in their own home to prevent homelessness has steadily increased since 2013;
- Between 2013 and 2017, homelessness applications increased by 10.2% and cases accepted as homeless increased by 54.4%;
- During 2018/19, there has been a 38.2% increase in the number of homeless enquiries received and enquiries that triggered a formal HRA application increased by 35%;
- Until 2018, the main priority need of households accepted as homeless was 'Having Dependent Children' - 52% of all cases, with Mental Health and Physical disability being the main priority need for single adult households;
- Mental health has remained the top priority need for in 2018/19 at 13%, Drug dependency and Alcohol dependency have increased from 2% to 12% and Physical disability has remained at 10% of households accepted as homeless;
- During 2018/19, 1104 households were owed a Prevention or Relief duty, of whom 566 had their homelessness prevented or relieved and 117 were owed a main duty;
- At initial assessment, 92% of the households assessed in 2018/19 were either Single parent (female) or single adult households;
- Of the households owed a relief duty 83% were single adults (62% single males compared to 52% for the South West region) compared to 73% for the South West;
- 'Friends or family unable to accommodate' and 'End of Assured shorthold tenancy' are jointly the top reasons for homelessness for households owed a duty, 28% each;
- The level of households in NS owed a relief duty where the main support needs were due to either Drug dependency, Alcohol dependency or were households consisting of young people requiring support, were all twice the regional level;
- While regular counts have identified as many as 15 rough sleepers on a single night, the average number of rough sleepers has increased from 5.2 for the whole of 2017/18 to 8.4 for 2018/19;
- Rough sleepers in the 18 to 25 age group are higher than the regional average;

- Working with individual rough sleepers has, so far, led to positive outcomes in 15 cases in 2019/20;
- 61 households were in Temporary Accommodation at the end of 2018/19, a reduction of 18.7% on the previous year;

## Achievements so far

Our aim is to build upon these achievements and continue to be creative and enthusiastic in delivering initiatives that have a positive impact on the lives of those threatened with homelessness or homeless and/or rough sleeping.

- **Successful** implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 including managing change, training staff and training provided for public bodies regarding the new 'Duty to Refer' and updated the Home Choice policy to reflect new duties of Homeless Reduction Act 2017;
- **Prevented** and relieved 568 households from homelessness during 18/19. High proportion of homelessness prevented over the last seven years;
- **Reduction** in the number of households owed the main homeless duty;
- **New** Lettings Team have successfully increased private rented supply to help house homeless and threatened with homelessness households, by establishing strong relationships with private landlords and enhancing incentive packages, to continue to increase properties and quality available;
- **Innovative** use of the Hinkley Point C mitigation funding creating 130 PRS bed spaces in 18/19 and the introduction of a rent guarantee scheme in June 2019;
- **Introduced** the free Responsible Tenants course – tenancy ready training with Weston College;
- **Effective** use of top slice of the Discretionary Housing Payment budget in the prevention homelessness;
- **Increased** emergency housing options for young people and minimised the number of 16/17 year olds taken into care through joint working with Children's Services;
- **Improved** multi-agency work around: domestic abuse, mental health, rough sleeping, 16/17-year olds and care leavers;
- **Joint** working with local homeless organisations and charities in addressing homelessness and rough sleeping, including supporting the launch of night provision for rough sleepers and setting up a multi-agency Single and Street Homeless Partnership (SSHP);
- **Fruitful** bids to the MHCLG Rough Sleeper Initiative and Rapid Rehousing Pathway funding streams, to support and extend provision of rough sleeping and prevention services by a partnership approach:
  - New Rough Sleeping Outreach Team;
  - Dedicated tenancy support and advice worker for rough sleepers;



- Advice hub set up to enable rough sleepers to access a range of services and referral pathways;
- New homelessness outreach surgery in Clevedon;

Some of the above will be further highlighted later in this strategy.

## Partnership Approach

We cannot prevent homelessness and rough sleeping on our own. Many partners from the statutory, voluntary and faith sectors are involved in our current initiatives and continue to assist us.

We recognise the strengths and resources that our partners bring to achieving positive outcomes for those in housing need. It is a shared responsibility and we aim to work together to deliver services that provide positive pathways for those people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, including those who are currently rough sleeping.

The Single and Street Homelessness Partnership (S&SHP) is a multi-agency strategic partnership committed to a range of actions to reduce rough sleeping in North Somerset, eventually to zero, which are reflected in our action list. The shared vision, principles and role of this partnership have been recently updated. They have a clear commitment to *'take a range of actions as a multi-agency strategic partnership to reduce rough sleeping in North Somerset, eventually to zero'*. But the partnership recognises that the complex issue of rough sleeping cannot be addressed by any one organisation or agency. The Partnership has recently changed its name to Street 2 Settled to better reflect its work

The Housing Advice and Homeless Prevention Forum is a long-standing multi-agency operational meeting and acts as an exchange network for homelessness practitioners in North Somerset. With the inception of the new S&SHP, attendance at the forum has declined in recent months so therefore, a review will be undertaken, and the groups' role and purpose may be redefined.

North Somerset Council was successful in being awarded funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government's (MHCLG) Rough Sleeper Initiative and Rapid Rehousing Pathway Funds.

We are using this funding to achieve successful outcomes both in prevention and homelessness/rough sleeping initiatives, by working in partnership with the YMCA Dulverton Group and the Night Assessment Centre /Somewhere to Go. We have also put more resources into our Homeless Prevention Team, specifically to support rough sleeping. More details of how this funding is used and the initiatives undertaken can be found in the Priorities section of this Strategy.

We really value the input from all sectors and the commitment they have demonstrated with a partnership approach and a joint action plan.

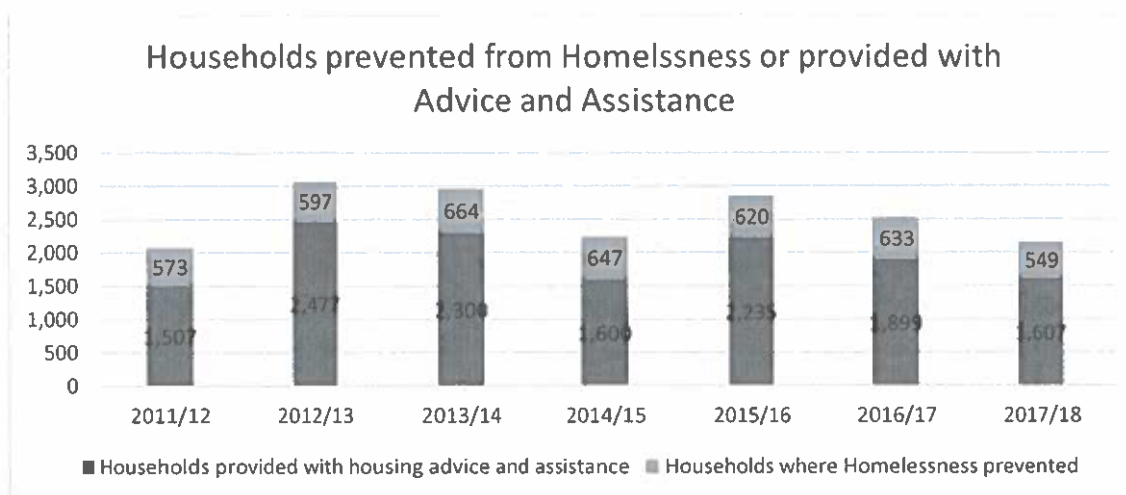
# Priorities

## Preventing Homelessness

### Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, although challenging in terms of resourcing and workspace, did not require a complete cultural shift in how we work, because the Homeless Prevention Team have always had the prevention of homelessness as their key priority and continue to work tirelessly to achieve this. Prior to the Act, they also worked with households at a much earlier stage and with a wider range of people and continue to be creative in finding solutions and meeting needs.

This is reflected in the statistics below:



We have embraced the changes the HRA brought about and have restructured our service to meet its requirements (more details can be found in service delivery section below) using 'Flexible Homeless Support Grant' and 'New Burdens Grant' effectively to ensure the service is robust. We were also one of the pilot authorities for a new ICT homeless prevention system. This worked well and we are currently seeking to procure a new system that will cover both homeless prevention and choice-based lettings. All staff have been HRA trained and continue to keep up to date with good practice and learning from quality assessments of their cases. Recruitment continues to be a challenge with so many local authorities competing for staff, however, we are looking at alternatives for advertising jobs to make vacancies more visible and attractive to apply for.

### Advice and Prevention

Our Homeless Prevention service is made up of staff covering a broad range of prevention services. This includes Homeless Prevention Officers dealing with all cases but particularly working with households through prevention or relief of their

homelessness (including households who may have become homeless intentionally) and with those likely to be owed a main homeless duty

Staff are all experienced in working with households with a wide variety of needs, including substance misuse, veterans, gypsies & travellers, and those with physical and learning disabilities needs. Officers have a specialised lead in one of the following areas:

- Mental Health
- Domestic Abuse
- Rough Sleepers/ Anti-Social Behaviour
- 16/17-year olds– dedicated officer funded by Children's Service and co-located
- Care Leavers – dedicated officer funded jointly by Housing and Leaving Care service
- Hospital discharge
- Dangerous offenders

People in housing need are firstly triaged and then given a case officer. Personal housing plans are then developed with each person and are individual to their circumstances and appropriate referrals are made to other services along with opportunities for employment and training.

Homeless Prevention Assistants are a new addition to the team as a result of the implementation of the HRA and they specialise in dealing with single and non-family households. We have also created a new Private Lettings Team within the service (more details can be found in the Increasing Supply section). Within this team is a new Tenancy Support Officer, dedicated to preventing homelessness for those living in the private rented sector. The role gives support to sustain tenancies including access to welfare provision, benefits and training and skills, as well as giving confidence to landlords that tenants are supported.

### **Other Tools to Prevent Homelessness**

- Dedicated Discretionary Housing Payment Fund, for fast track payments to help with housing costs;
- A variety of initiatives that support prevention work through Hinkley Point C mitigation funding, for example, landlord incentives for giving 12months tenancies and improvements to properties so they are ready to let;
- Liaison with landlords and other agencies to help sustain tenancies, including dedicated tenancy support;
- Delivery of housing advice through outreach services as well as the Town Hall;
- Funding initiatives such as street outreach and access to advice from Citizens Advice North Somerset;
- Multi-agency partnerships to work together to tackle homelessness;

## **Working Together**

On a regional level, we meet regularly with colleagues across the West of England to share good practice and innovation, and to improve effectiveness of our referral systems and seek opportunities for joint working on broader initiatives where appropriate. We also work with the Somerset Authorities in sharing good practice and host visits, for those who want to see our work in practice.

We have an established Homelessness Forum and a broader multi-agency partnership which have help shaped this strategy. All play their part in the prevention of homelessness and this is demonstrated in our action plan

Managers and Homeless Prevention staff attend a variety of multi-agency meetings for example: -

- Domestic Abuse MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference);
- Street Communities;
- ASB MARAC;
- Social Care Team Around the Family, Case conferences, strategy meetings;
- Sub Regional Housing Support and Options Group;
- Avon and Somerset Rough Sleepers Steering Group;
- Reducing Reoffending Accommodation Workstream

These groups work across directorates and teams within the council, as well as outside agencies, to achieve positive outcomes beyond housing need.

The team are pleased to be represented on the 1 Front Door project, that joins up services across the Council and other agencies, to share information and support those at risk of domestic abuse.

Our commitments can be found in our action list below:

## **Preventing Homelessness – Proposed Actions**

- To continue to make effective use of Discretionary Housing Payments to prevent homelessness and maintain tenancies
- Continue to provide effective and timely advice which is outcome focussed for those in housing need, including continuing to fund independent advice agencies such as Citizens Advice
- Seek further creative and innovative solutions to prevent homelessness, including using funding in a flexible manner
- Tailoring personal housing plans to continue to meet individual circumstances, including access to skills and employment opportunities
- Continue to meet the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act and evaluate outcomes and impact on resources
- Further develop and strengthen multi- agency working, to enable joint initiatives and identify those at risk of homelessness, for example, those leaving prison or hospital, families, young people and care leavers
- Develop a robust triage system, that provides a seamless service to case management and advice and improves customer experience
- Complete procurement of integrated ICT system for choice-based lettings and homelessness prevention, to improve the customer experience
- Continue to share with partner agencies, approaches to mitigating the impact of welfare reforms and other financial pressures on low income families, to avoid difficulties with rent payments and rent arrears
- Increase the number of households accessing tenancy support for those at risk of repeat homelessness
- Continue to work proactively with social and private landlords, to identify and support people at risk of homelessness and give support to sustain tenancies

## Ending Rough Sleeping

Nobody should have to sleep out on the streets. Numbers have been rising both nationally and locally and it is unacceptable. Rough sleeping has an immediate and long-lasting impact on an individual's health and well-being and requires a co-ordinated and multi-agency approach to tackle this. North Somerset Street 2 Settled Partnership has committed to a range of actions to reduce rough sleeping in North Somerset. Working together we have a real opportunity to change the lives of those sleeping rough, or those at risk of sleeping rough, by providing timely prevention services, engagement and support to tailor individual pathways to meet needs.

There are counts of rough sleepers carried out by the YMCA outreach workers and members of the Homelessness prevention team each week throughout the year, in order to monitor and engage with individuals in need of the multi-agency services available. Regular counts have enabled the identification of rough sleepers as being either new to the area, returning to the area or a small group who are entrenched rough sleepers. These counts have identified an increase in rough sleeping during the last two complete years:

	2017/18	2018/19
Average Number of Rough Sleepers*	5.2	8.4

(\*Note that this is an average figure for each whole year – some counts have identified up to 15 cases in a single night)

### Our Services

There are many reasons why some people are at risk of sleeping rough or already sleeping on the streets. Many will have complex and multiple needs which go beyond just the need for housing, such as substance misuse and mental and physical health issues. It is important to understand the root causes and the complexities that have led to some people being unable to sustain or access settled accommodation and plan interventions that help both the accommodation and support required.

Our service is proactive and tailored to the individual and considers their personal circumstances and experiences. We engage directly at an individual level with people who sleep rough through a multi-agency approach and most rough sleepers are known to us by name. This service is delivered on the streets or at specific drop in sessions for those at risk of rough sleeping or already on the streets. Rough sleepers are often the victims of crime and violence. The team are trained to identify signs of domestic abuse and exploitation due to vulnerability and can make appropriate safeguarding referrals. They also consider options for those who are co-dependent or have pets, e.g. dogs, so they can be housed together where possible.

Where a person is not ready to engage with support, we will not give up on them and we will continue to try and build trust and confidence, so they feel they are able to take up our offer of support.

Once housed, we recognise the importance of support and engagement beyond the initial crisis of rough sleeping, as this will help build their confidence, resilience and

support networks. It will also provide opportunities for learning new skills to access or sustain employment and maintain engagement with health professionals.

We have a dedicated and resourceful Homeless Prevention service, who have been successful in accessing Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) and Rapid Rehousing Pathway (RRP) funding. We have used it to enhance our services by the following:

**Outreach** - We are pleased to be working in partnership with the YMCA Dulverton Group to deliver outreach and support services. We have funded

- 1x Substance Misuse Outreach Worker and a part-time general Outreach Support Worker;
- 1x Navigator – offering tailored support throughout pathway journey and personalised budgets;

These staff deliver outreach services to those in need including making referrals to our Homeless Prevention Team.

**Night and Day Assessment Services** – We are also pleased to be working in partnership with the Night Assessment Centre and Somewhere to Go charities and the Town Council, to help deliver emergency accommodation and assessment services. We have given funding towards:

- The provision of a 'hub' facility for assessment, advice and referral from a variety of agencies including dedicated homeless prevention staff and including drop-in for access to community nurses, addiction services, Citizens Advice, welfare and benefits and employment and skills opportunities;
- Cold weather provision (emergency shelter in adverse weather);
- Extra bed spaces in night provision;

**Homeless Prevention Service** – We have enhanced the service the staff provide by funding:

- 1 x Rough Sleeper Co-Ordinator who oversees all the initiatives our multi-agency partnership has committed to and ensures outcomes are met and reported to MHCLG, as well as sharing good practice and learning from others;
- 1x Tenancy Support Officer for Rough Sleepers housed, based in our in-house Private Rented Lettings Team, offering support to sustain tenancies;
- 1x Homeless Prevention Assistant for Rough Sleepers, offering rapid assessment and referral at the 'hub'. This post is part of a bigger homeless prevention team who have significant experience of preventing homelessness or finding creative solutions to those with complex needs who may be already homeless;

We will actively publicise the methods that will enable members of the public to make donations or volunteer to assist appropriate local faith groups, charities or other organisations assisting rough sleepers, to discourage street begging. We will also

work with partners to investigate the potential to develop a 'single point' of giving for donations.

We embrace the challenges ahead and will continue to provide innovative and flexible solutions with partner agencies to end rough sleeping wherever possible.

Our commitments can be found in our action list below:

### **Ending Rough Sleeping – Proposed Actions**

- Explore funding options to continue to deliver successful RSI and RRP funded initiatives beyond 31 March 2020;
- Evaluate RSI and RRP initiatives to determine those we wish to expand or reduce depending on success;
- Highlight good practice and continue to seek innovative solutions to end rough sleeping;
- Continue to build and strengthen our proactive work with other agencies, the voluntary sector and faith organisations, to avoid duplication, raise the profile of services available and improve outcomes for rough sleepers;
- Ensure our referral mechanisms are clear and understood by all partners;
- Investigate the potential to develop a 'single point of giving' and publicise existing routes for charitable donations to discourage street begging;
- Develop a sensitive approach to bedding and personal belongings left on the street and seek accessible storage facilities;
- Reduce the numbers sleeping rough and increase the number of rough sleepers engaging with services;
- Continue to develop a person-centred approach, by considering all personal circumstances and tailoring interventions;
- Progress supported 'move-on' accommodation for those ready to leave the night assessment centre, including options for female only supported housing provision for those with complex needs and vulnerabilities, as well adopting Housing First principles where this is appropriate;
- Ensure our Severe Weather Emergency Protocol continues to be robust and is activated when needed and appropriate accommodation is available;
- Work closer with addiction and mental health services when procuring services for rough sleepers and pool resources where appropriate in delivering services;



## **Supporting Vulnerable Households**

Homelessness is not just about finding a home for someone. Often people facing homelessness have much broader needs that can be complex, and some are more vulnerable than others. This can be, for example, through mental health, physical health issues, substance misuse, domestic violence, learning disabilities, leaving prison, veterans, being young or older or a variety of other factors.

Our aim is to ensure we identify support issues and deal with them alongside accessing suitable accommodation that meets the need of individual households. Our officers have experience of working with a variety of people and offer empathy and understanding when identifying needs.

We have dedicated officers for Care Leavers and Young People, and this includes support during tenancies.

Support for those who struggle to find and successfully manage a tenancy is key in preventing homelessness. We have expanded our tenancy support service and we are already seeing positive results. Tenancy support is beyond just sustaining a tenancy they help with referrals to other agencies and ensuring any welfare benefits are claimed as well as highlighting training and employment opportunities.

We are working closely with our colleagues in Contract and Commissioning to ensure there is a range of supported accommodation available. This includes the procuring of a new service for young people's supported housing which will open up employment and skills opportunities and move on facilities for independent living.

We have a dedicated supported housing register, referrals are assessed, and households are matched to appropriate providers of housing and support according to their needs. We are looking to integrate this register within our general choice-based lettings and homeless prevention system, that we are currently renewing.

As mentioned earlier, our homeless prevention staff are skilled and take the lead for vulnerable groups, attending multi-agency case conferences when necessary. We work closely with Weston College and refer households to the 'Essentials: Careers, Housing, Money and Me' course to help develop skills in managing a tenancy, finance and gaining employment.

A significant number of homeless households we work with, have drug and alcohol addictions. We have strengthened our outreach team to include a substance misuse worker. We will strive to improve outcomes for this group of people and will look to work closer with addiction services and health colleagues, to have a targeted approach for the use of our funding.

For those fleeing domestic violence, we aim to support households into safe accommodation with support where necessary. We participate fully in the 1 Front Door project and work with a variety of agencies to help households seek the support they need.

Understanding current and future needs is important to ensure there is a balance of appropriate housing and support services to meet demands. Through working across

services and organisations, we can share information that will help us plan and use our resources effectively. This includes, ensuring that any new housing supply is accessible to those with physical disabilities.

Our commitments can be found in our action list below:

### **Supporting Vulnerable Households – Proposed Actions**

- Work with colleagues in Contracts and Commissioning, to ensure new supported housing options for young people are successfully commissioned and the impact on current service users are minimised;
- Improve the options available to applicants with complex needs;
- Identify other supported housing needs and evaluate existing accommodation provision;
- Continue to work with our partner agencies to deliver outreach and advice services to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness;
- Continue to refer vulnerable households to our tenancy support officer to help support them to sustain tenancies and access other services;
- Increase case conferences for those identified as most vulnerable to fast track support services from health care professionals;
- Work closely with housing providers to continue to identify those households most at risk of homelessness, so early intervention can take place;
- Ensure our Allocation Policy is robust and up to date and those with support needs have the appropriate banding to access social housing;
- Build upon relationships with key partners including adult and children's services to increase support and accommodation options available;

## Increasing the supply of affordable housing

### Private Rented Housing

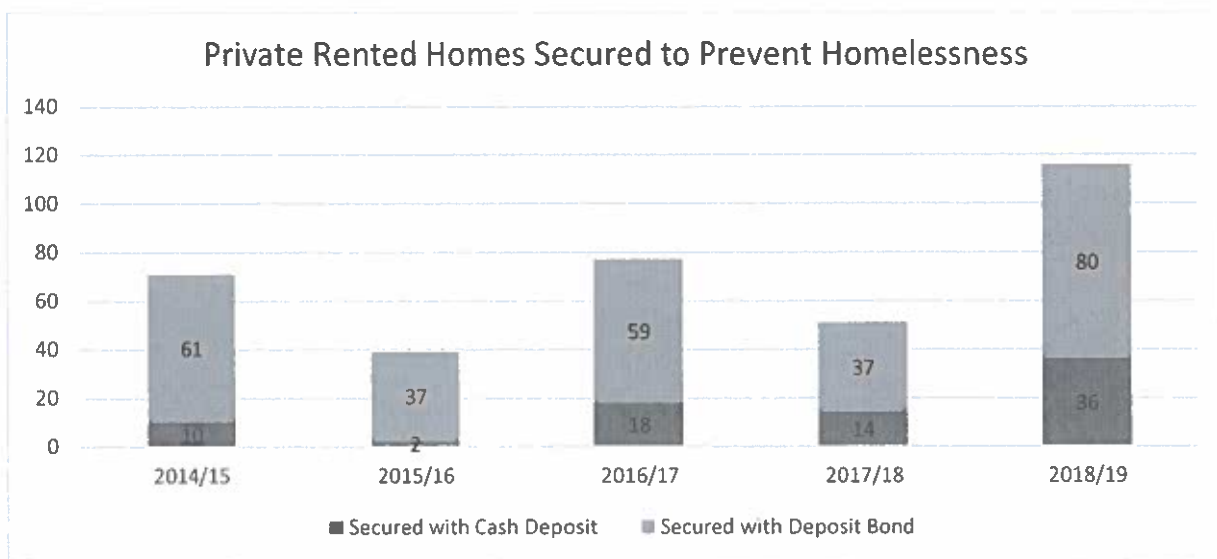
Demand for social housing is growing, there are currently 3,424 households on our housing register – HomeChoice. During the last five years, there has been a overall decrease in the number of allocations made each year. In 2014/15 there were 630 and in 2018/19 there were 559, which highlights that demand outstrips supply.



Therefore, we rely on the private rented sector as a main source of accommodation for those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Our new Lettings Team do an excellent job working with landlords to secure good quality, affordable private rented homes. They do this by

- Ensuring all private rented properties have been inspected, assessed and conform with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (and where appropriate the Houses in Multiple Occupation Licencing requirements) as being fit for occupation;
- Providing a dedicated landlord service which includes, advice, tenant finding, inventories, tenancy sign up and agreements, regular inspections and tenancy support;
- Providing landlords with access to funding to improve properties, incentives to provide 12-month tenancies through the Hinkley Point C mitigation fund, access to professional membership and in some cases, guaranteeing rent;
- Networking events and information and good practice sharing;
- Providing a dedicated tenant service which includes ensuring tenants can afford to rent, are matched to an appropriate home, can access tenancy support if required, welfare and start up home packs where necessary, referrals to other agencies e.g. finance, training and skills, help with accessing benefits and bank accounts;

During 2018/19 the team secured 116 PRS homes.



## Social Housing

Good quality and affordable PRS homes play an important role, however, the ending of assured shorthold tenancies continues to be the joint highest reason for homelessness (along with family or friends being unable to accommodate). To mitigate against this, we incentivise landlords to give longer tenancies and with our dedicated support service we hope to achieve a reduction in ending of tenancies by the landlords we work with. We also work with friends and family to see if they can keep those they are accommodating while we work with them to find more suitable accommodation and prevent homelessness.

Affordability is a major factor with rising rents There is no doubt that for households on a low income or with support needs, social housing is a much more secure tenure and we are committed to increasing supply within this sector. Our affordable housing development programme has a target of 196 homes for delivery in 2019/20 and we hope to deliver an average of 260 per year over the next five years with our registered housing provider partners (housing associations).

In determining the amount and type of housing needed to meet demand, we work with our neighbouring local authorities to commission strategic housing need surveys and this informs each local authority's strategic planning for housing across all tenures.

Access to social housing is through the Council's housing register – Home Choice. Our priority is to ensure housing providers do not 'skip' applicants who are highest on the list. This can happen where a housing provider deems a household too much of a risk in terms of support or financial issues. We meet regularly with housing providers and monitor data on allocations and share findings with partners to find solutions to alleviate perceived risk factors.

Supported housing supply varies and we need to be able to predict needs to ensure adequate supply is available and so we continue to research and evaluate needs.

## **Emergency housing and Temporary Accommodation**

In some homelessness cases, it is not always possible for a homeless household to go directly into long term housing. So temporary accommodation is used while we await a more sustainable housing solution or where we are carrying out ongoing enquiries into the circumstances of a household to whom, we may have a duty to house. Our temporary accommodation is provided by Alliance Homes (our stock transfer partner) and is spread throughout the district and is of varying size and type – we do not use hostel accommodation. We also have nightly accommodation providers, which does include some bed and breakfast establishments, however, use of these are kept to an absolute minimum for families and are mainly used for single households or couples. We are currently procuring a framework of providers to supply nightly emergency accommodation and the framework should be in place in early 2020. As described in the Rough Sleepers section of this Strategy, we have cold weather provision and nightly assessment accommodation for those homeless on the streets.

## **Empty Properties**

We continue to target empty home owners with publicity about our Lettings Service, to encourage them with incentives, to make their properties available to let to those households on our housing register. Owners are also invited to networking events, where advice about our landlord incentives and improvement loans and grants are discussed. They can hear about our full service and get the advice on the standards required and letting direct from professionals.

Our commitments can be found in our action list below:

## **Increasing Affordable Housing Supply – Proposed Actions**

- Continue to work in partnership with registered housing providers and Homes England, to increase the number of affordable social housing homes built, to meet the demand of those households on our housing register;
- Seek innovative solutions to develop move on and supported housing for households who are vulnerable and/or have complex needs;
- Use capital funding effectively to support development and achieve additional affordable homes over policy requirement, where appropriate and viable;
- Contribute to the ambitions for regeneration and housing development opportunities within North Somerset by continuing to work closely with colleagues across the council;
- Continue to provide an accessible and efficient enabling service to registered providers, developers and other stakeholders, to assist in the development process;
- Ensure the Council's Allocation Policy is kept up to date, to enable access to social housing for those in most need to bid through our choice-based lettings service – HomeChoice;
- Complete procurement and full implementation of a new integrated ICT system for preventing homelessness and choice-based letting;
- Reduce the number of days households stay in B & B or emergency accommodation, get more households into long term accommodation and review our temporary accommodation referrals process;
- Complete the procurement of emergency accommodation provision;
- Continue to deliver an excellent private lettings service, by increasing the number of landlords working with us to provide affordable and good quality private rented sector homes, on at least 12 months tenancies wherever possible;
- Seek to increase the number of landlords willing to take pets;
- Continue to use Hinkley Point C funding, to help increase accommodation in the private rented sector by giving incentives to landlords offering accommodation and seeking innovative solutions to allow those with limited income, to access private rented sector homes;
- Help to ensure homes in the private rented sector are safe and good quality by continuing to work closely with colleagues in our private rented standards team;
- Continue to encourage empty property owners to consider renting their properties to those on the Home Choice register;
- Promote rent guarantee scheme to enable access to the private rented sector, for those under threat of homelessness;

## Consultation and Feedback

Extensive consultation with stakeholders and staff informed our original Preventing Homelessness Strategy back in 2017. At the time there was consultation with and ideas from the Housing and Homelessness Prevention Forum, the Adult Services and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Panel and 'open to all' consultation via the NSC *Have Your Say* web page. There were also recommendations from a People and Communities Board Appreciative Inquiry that were adopted.

As this is a review and updating of the previous strategy (in the light of much greater emphasis on our efforts to tackle rough sleeping), we have kept consultation relatively light touch in order not to trigger consultation fatigue from our partners. Since the original PHS was published we have the advantage of input from the now established Street 2 Settled (S2S) partnership. Working with them, we can work to ensure greater multi-agency buy-in and joined up delivery.

We carried out an open consultation of the draft strategy document using the NSC 'Have your say' e-consultation pages in October 2019 and in addition we consulted with all of our key stakeholders, including members of, and organisations connected with, the S2S (which covers a wide spectrum of individuals and organisations connected with homelessness from the voluntary sector, faith groups and other partner agencies), registered providers of social housing, Town and Parish councils and NSC ward members.

We have also made sure all parts of the council are aware of this review as there are several areas e.g. around young people and street homelessness where a range of different council services are involved.

The purpose of the consultation exercise was to obtain feedback and comments about the draft strategy, that could help the final strategy meet its aim to:

***'Prevent homelessness and eradicate rough sleeping in North Somerset, by working together in partnership to meet the housing and broader needs of those who are at risk or are already homeless'.***

The consultation asked for feedback to five questions about the draft strategy and the responses were **positive** overall.

Six completed questionnaires were received from our e-consultation and a detailed response from an individual ward member. To summarize, the responses that we received could be grouped under three broad themes of:

- issues that were already addressed within the draft;
- issues that required more clarity in the final draft;
- issues that required an additional focus or priority;

Under the first category, the responses that referred to issues already included or reflected in the proposed priorities, comprised:

- the acknowledgement of the shortage of affordable accommodation in all tenures;
- support and accommodation for vulnerable households (including those households with addiction, substance misuse and mental health issues);
- mitigation of the effects of welfare reform (particularly Universal credit);
- the need for move-on accommodation;
- the adoption of 'Housing First' principles as part of the partnership approach to rough sleeping;

Under the second category, the responses received that raised issues requiring more clarity within the document or that referred to procedural issues, included:

- our use of short-term emergency accommodation;
- our use of temporary Accommodation;
- sharing clients Personal Housing plans;

Under the third category, the responses received that required the inclusion of an additional focus or priority involved:

- raising the profile of services available to rough sleepers;
- help change donation behaviour from the public;

The results of the e-consultation were considered by the councils' Adult Services and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Panel and the Strategy was updated in light of their comments.

The full details of the Consultation responses received and the councils' response to the issues raised are attached at Appendix 3.



# Appendix 1

## 1. Update to Homelessness Review 2017

The purpose of this updated Homelessness Review is to pull together information (held by the council, central government and our partners) about homelessness and rough sleeping within North Somerset. The review assesses the levels and patterns of homelessness and identified gaps in our knowledge and services available to homeless households. The information has helped inform the new **Priorities and Action Plan for the Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (PHS)** for North Somerset.

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) was enacted in April 2018 and changed the way in which all local authorities deliver services to homeless households, by placing duties on them to intervene at an earlier stage to prevent or relieve homelessness in their areas.

The HRA and associated guidance, requires housing authorities to provide services to all those households affected by homelessness not just those who have a priority need (e.g. have dependent children or a disability). This means that local authorities are now legally required to perform a Prevention duty and a Relief duty for all households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness (even if they have become homeless intentionally) in addition to the already legislated Main duty, as long as they are eligible for public funds and are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days.

As a result of the changes introduced by the HRA, the way in which data about homeless households is collected and recorded, has changed and it is not possible to easily compare all current data, with historical data. To determine trends over time, therefore, we have highlighted historical trends to provide contextual data for the five years from April 2013 to March 2018 (prior to the implementation of the Act) and then offer the most recent data available for 2018/19 to reflect the impact of the HRA.

### **Key achievements Since the Previous Preventing Homelessness Strategy**

Since the last strategy, we have made the following achievements, which include the majority of the actions from the former plan and where appropriate outstanding actions have been included in the new action plan: -

- Implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act;
- Training provided for public bodies regarding the new 'Duty to Refer';
- Reduction in the number of households owed the main homeless duty;
- Set up and facilitated the Single and Street Homeless Partnership (now 'Street 2 Settled')

- Supported the launch of the Night Assessment Centre for rough sleepers;
- New Lettings Team increased private sector supply to house homeless and threatened with homeless households;
- Enhanced landlords' incentives package to increase the supply of private rented accommodation
- Several landlords 'breakfast events' hosted
- Introduction of the Responsible Tenants course
- Direct administration of top slice of the Discretionary Housing Payment budget
- Successful bids to sub regional Rough Sleeper fund to support provision of rough sleeping prevention services
- Consolidating multi-agency work around: domestic abuse, mental health, rough sleeping, 16/17-year olds, care leavers
- Minimising the number of 16/17- year olds needing to be taken into LA care through joint working with the Children's Support and Safeguarding service
- High proportions of homelessness consistently prevented over the last seven years
- Improved emergency housing options for young people
- Improved processes established for the recovery of Housing Benefit from bed and breakfast placements

Our aim is to build upon these achievements and address the issues identified in the PHRSS.

## Homelessness Headlines

### The approaches and applications we have received

During the last five years, as Figure 1. below shows, while there was a downward trend for the number of households being provided with advice and assistance on homelessness, there has been an overall upward trend of the number of homeless applications received and the cases later accepted as homeless.

<p><b>Between 2013/14 and 2017/18, homeless applications received increased by 10.2% and the number of cases accepted as homeless increased by 55.4%;</b></p>
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**Figure 1.**

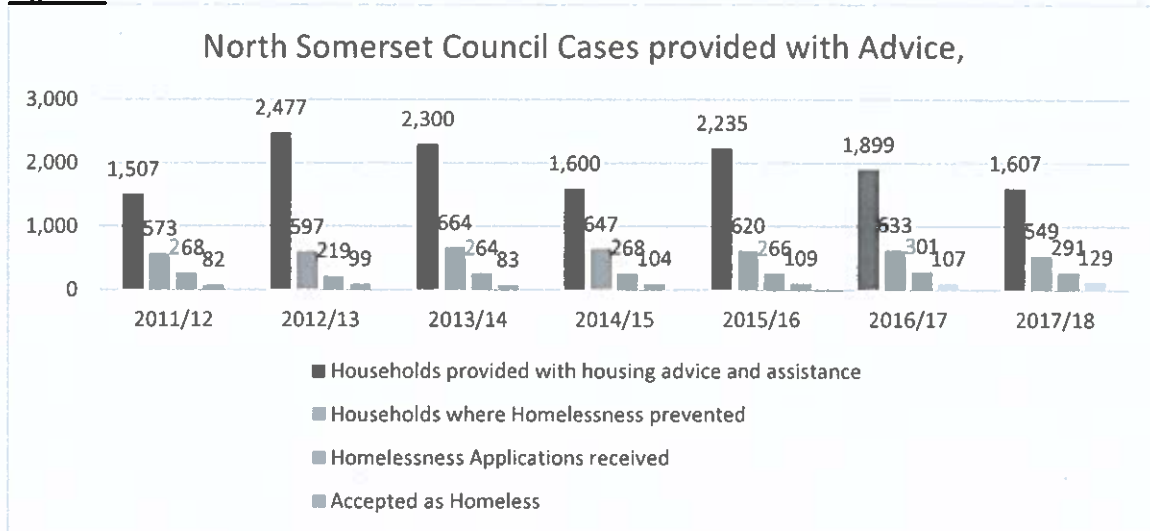
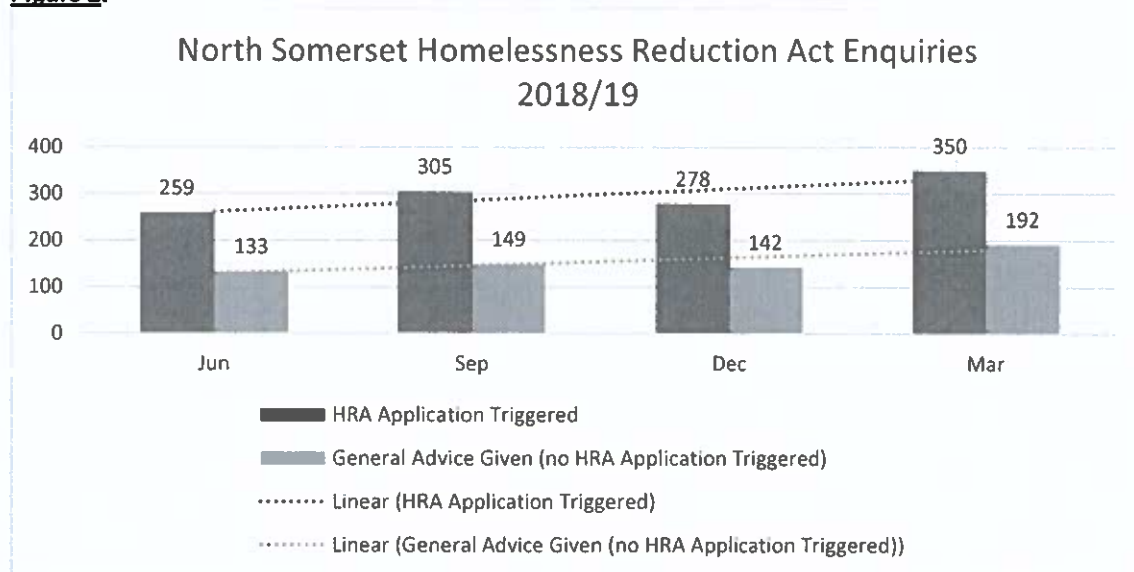


Figure 1 above also shows the number of cases where homelessness was prevented – this averaged **641 cases per year** from 2013/14 to 2016/17.

Following the introduction of the HRA, there has been a steady increase in the number of enquiries received throughout 2018/19, as Figure 2. shows below,

**Figure 2.**



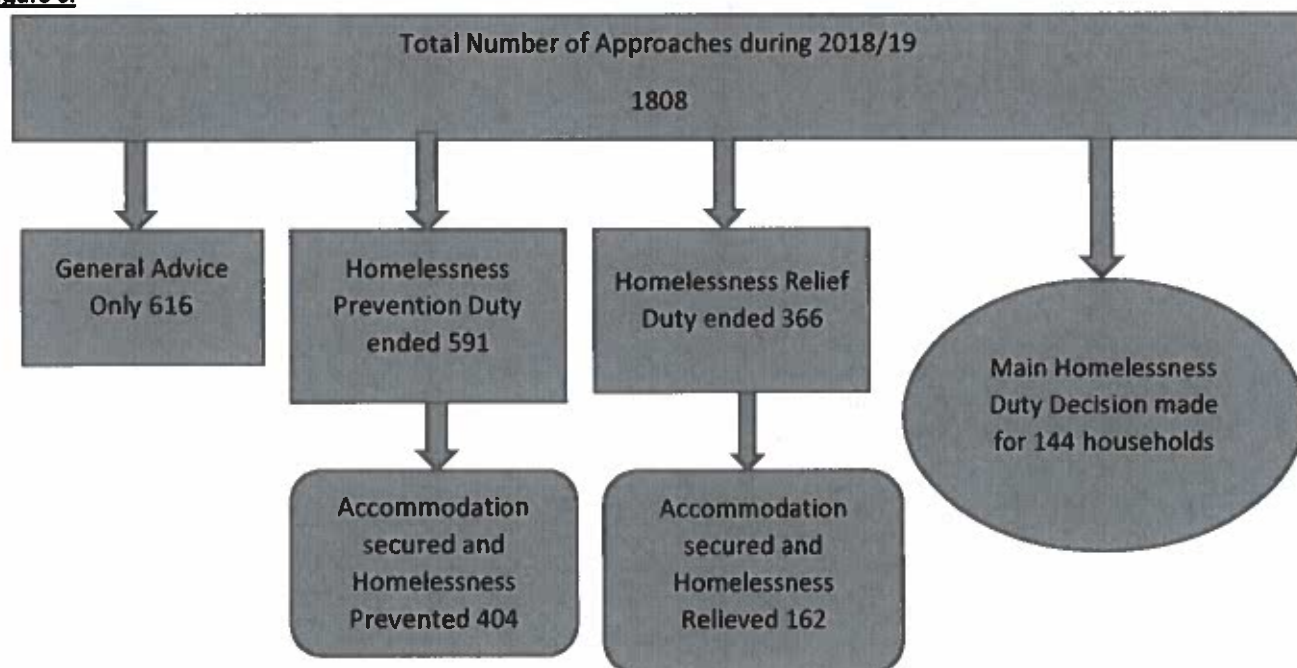
During 2018/19, there was an **increase of 38.2%** of the total number of HRA enquiries received, and of these, both the number of cases where general advice has been given and the number of cases where an HRA application had been triggered, increased by **44%** and **35%** respectively.

**How were the enquiries initially assessed?**

A total of 1,808 households approached the Council for homelessness advice during the year. Whilst this may appear to be an improvement on the 2,800 enquiries we have seen on average for the previous five years, they are not directly comparable

figures because of the way in which households are now assisted. This 'decrease' will, in part, be due to the new way in which applications are dealt with under the HRA whereby multiple approaches by the same household are only recorded as a single approach.

**Figure 3.**



As Figure 3 shows, of the **1,808** applications that were assessed, **616 households (34.1%)** were identified as needing **general advice only**; The remaining households would initially have been classed as having a homelessness prevention duty or a homelessness relief duty owed to them but will have taken differing paths, once the council ended their duty.

## Homelessness Prevention

### Moving to Alternative Accommodation or Remain in own home?

NSC has a strong record in tackling and preventing homelessness, either by securing alternative accommodation or enabling people where possible, to remain in their existing homes. We use a range of methods including negotiation, conciliation and mediation with private landlords, mortgage lenders or families, and liaison with colleagues assessing Housing Benefit or Universal Credit.

Assisting people to move to **alternative accommodation** has been the most common means of prevention throughout the last six years, (75% of cases in 2017/18), but prevention which allows households to **remain in their own home** is growing, with in excess of 104 cases recorded each year since 2013/14, that accounted for one in four cases in 2017/18.

Post HRA monitoring does not easily allow us to measure this prevention 'split' between a household remaining or moving to alternative accommodation, because

of the way our duty to a household ends by either preventing or relieving their homelessness.

The 2018/19 data is the first complete year set for post HRA procedures. This new data set reflects whether existing or alternative accommodation was secured for households when our **'prevention duty'** ended (it does not include those cases where our homelessness **'relief duty'** has ended).

Figure 4. below shows that the percentage of those **moving to alternative accommodation** as opposed to remaining in their own home, has increased on the previous 2 years to **78.6%** and is comparable to levels last seen in 2015/16.

**Figure 4.**



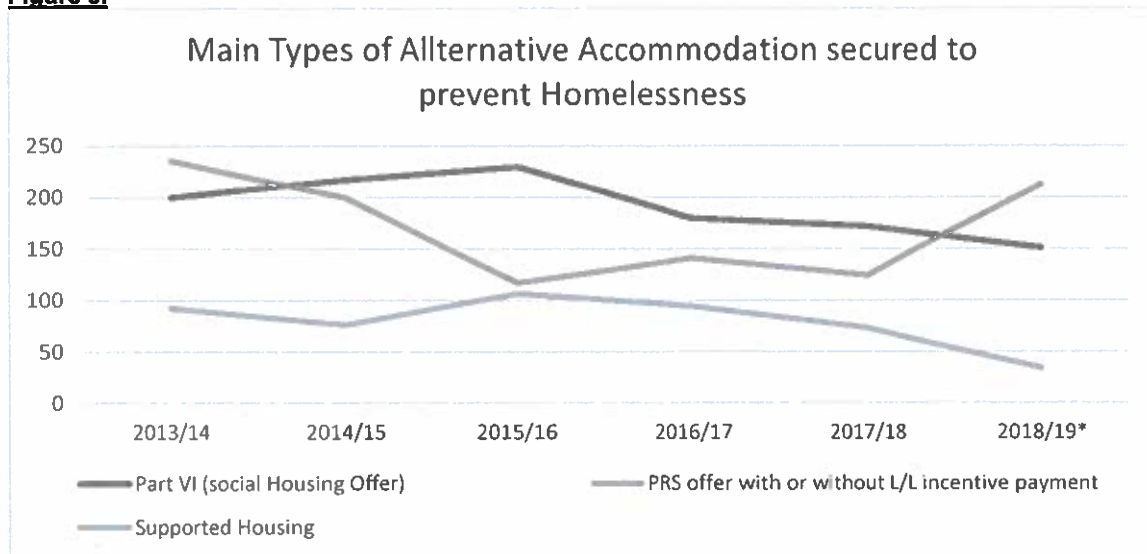
#### What types of alternative accommodation?

The three main types of accommodation secured in order to prevent a household becoming homeless, are a Part VI Social Housing offer (from a Registered Housing Provider); a Private Rented Sector (PRS) offer (with or without landlord incentive); or an offer of Supported Housing.

Alternative accommodation secured in Social Housing, the PRS and Supported Housing, accounted for the prevention of homelessness in 90% of the preventions in 2017/18 and 93% of preventions in 2018/19. Figure 5. below shows the breakdown

Between 2016/17 and 2017/18 the 'gap' between PRS offers and Social housing offers narrowed, but in 2018/19, social housing offers fell below PRS offers for the first time since 2013/14.

**Figure 5.**



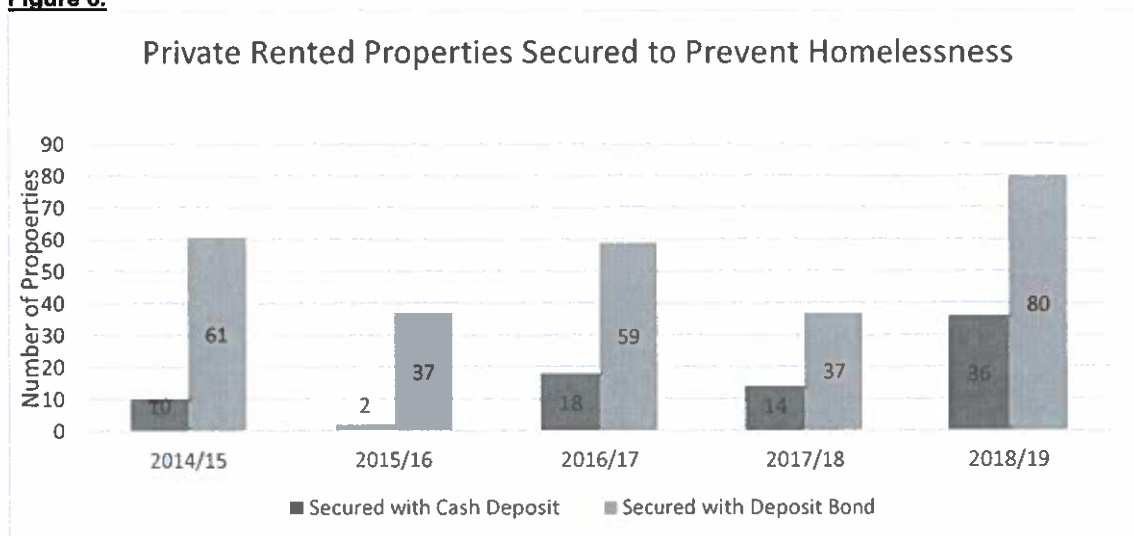
(2018/19 figure refers to accommodation secured at end of prevention duty)

In 2018/19, alternative accommodation secured in Social Housing to prevent homelessness, **decreased by 12.2%** from 172 to 151 cases and increased for PRS cases by **71.7%** from 124 to 213 cases;

The recent upward trend of accommodation secured in the PRS has been achieved with the help of the councils' lettings team who, with the support of funds from the Hinkley Point C Mitigation Funds, offer incentives to landlords to make properties available. Incentives offered are in the form of cash deposits, rent bonds, one off 'golden handshakes' or small repairs grants and are subject to a number of conditions relating to the condition and suitability of the property and importantly, to ensure that it is available for a minimum of 12 months.

The number of properties secured by use of a **deposit bond** has increased by **31%** in the last 5 years; the number of properties secured by a **cash deposit** has also increased in the last 5 years, by **260%** see Figure 6 below.

**Figure 6.**



### What other activities were carried out to prevent homelessness?

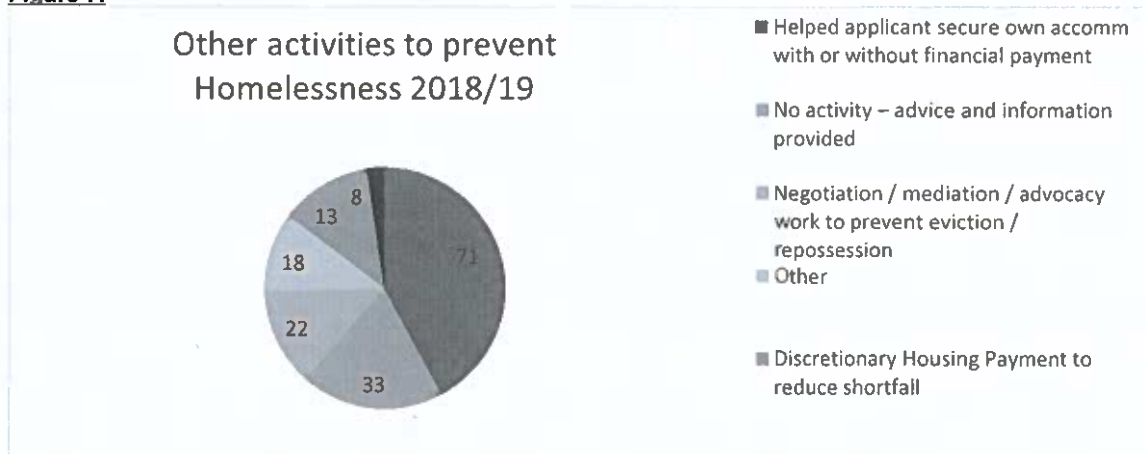
We use a range of methods to prevent homelessness and enable households to remain in their own home including negotiation, conciliation and mediation with private landlords, mortgage lenders or families, and liaison with colleagues assessing Housing Benefit or Universal Credit.

From 2013 to 2018, the main activity undertaken to enable households to remain in their own home was resolution of **HB/UC difficulties**, which accounted for over **34%** of cases. More recently, there has been a noticeable rise in the percentage of cases where homelessness was prevented by resolving rent arrears from 6% to over 21%

The Council is a member of the Local Government Association which continues to play a key role in lobbying Government, on behalf of its members, for changes to help mitigate the impact of welfare reforms. Councillors also regularly engage with Local MPs.

Figure 7. below confirms that during 2018/19 in addition to supported accommodation or accommodation in the PRS or social housing sector being secured directly by NSC for a household, the four most common activities to prevent homelessness were:- assisting the household securing accommodation that they will have sourced themselves (with or without the aid of a financial payment); the household being offered specialist supported housing; simply providing the household with advice and information; and negotiation/mediation/advocacy on behalf of the household to prevent an eviction from and the repossession of accommodation.

**Figure 7.**



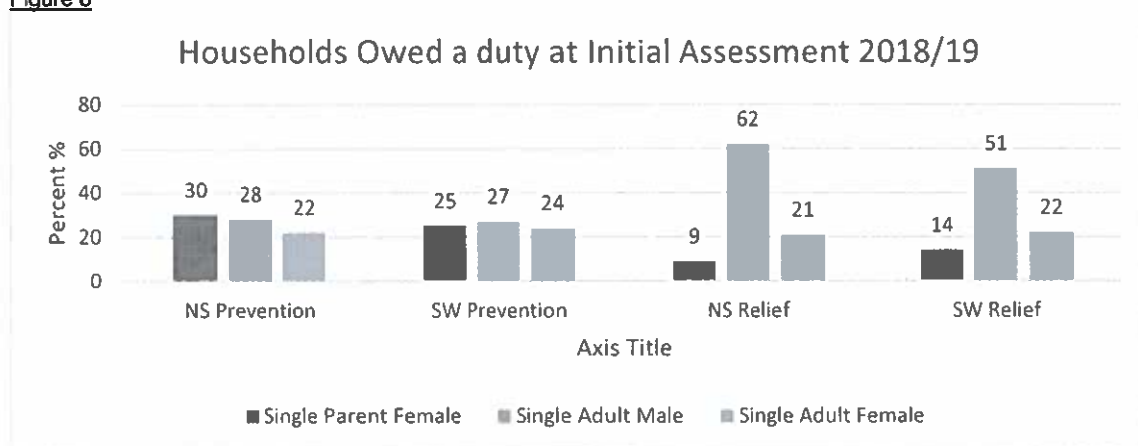
### What types of household are owed a duty?

During 2018/19, at initial assessment, **1104** households in North Somerset were recorded as being owed either a prevention duty (726) or a homelessness relief duty (378) and of these, a total of 566 secured accommodation and had their homelessness prevented (404) or relieved (162) under the HRA.

Figure 8 below, shows the three main household types of those owed a duty at the time their application was initially assessed.

At initial assessment, **30%** of households owed a prevention duty were **Single Parent Females**, with **Single Adult Males** representing **28%** and **Single Adult Females** a further **22%**. These three categories account for **80%** of all households owed a prevention duty, which broadly matches the split for the whole of the South West Region

Figure 8



At initial assessment, **62%** of households owed a relief duty were **Single Adult Males** more than 10% above the regional figure for the same group. **Single Adult Females** were 21% and Single Parent Female households 9%. These three categories account for **92%** of all households owed a relief duty, 5% more than the South West Region

A comparison of the household types after accommodation was secured and the relief or prevention duty had ended, offers more of a discrepancy, when compared to the South West region figures.

Figure 9 confirms that the main household type of those accommodated and owed a homelessness prevention duty was **Single Parent Female** (with dependent children) at **29%** - compared to 25% for the South West. The combined percentage of Single Adult Male and Single Adult Female households in NS were again on a par with the regional figure at 50% and 52% respectively;



Figure 9

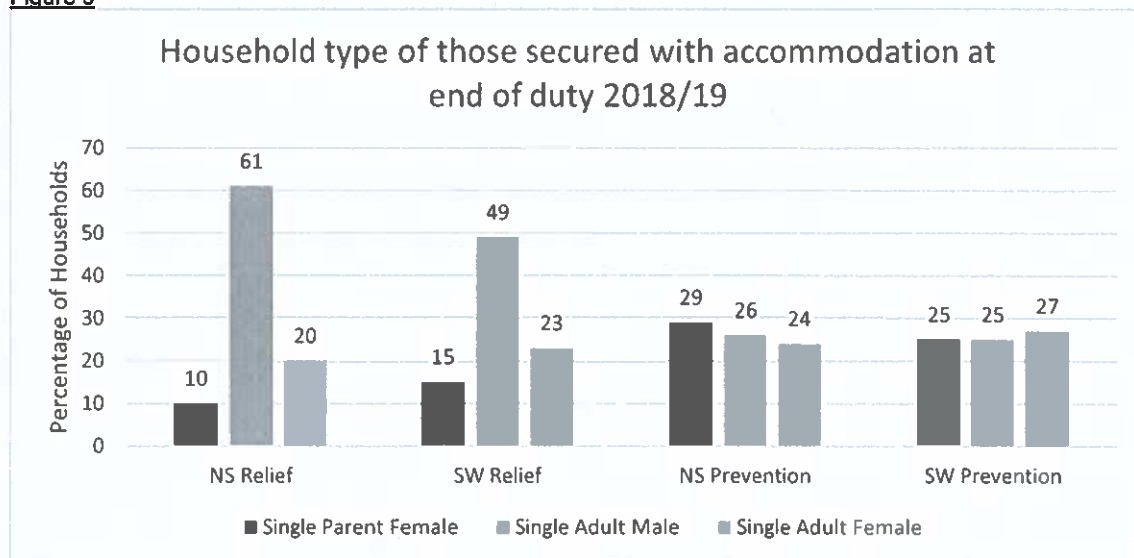


Figure 9 also shows, that the main household type of those secured with accommodation when their Homelessness Relief duty ended, was **Single Adult Male** with **61%** (12% higher than the regional figure). **Single Females** represented a further **20%**, confirming that **81%** of all households with accommodation secured at the end of the relief duty were single adults – This compares to **72%** for the same group for the South West region.

## Reasons why households became homeless

What were the main reasons for homelessness pre HRA?

In 2017/18, nearly one third of all households accepted as homelessness were categorised as **'Other emergency rough sleeping'**. This had increased by 38% since 2016/17 and more than doubled since 2014/15 and 2015/16 see Table 1 below;

While reasons for this sudden increase are unclear, it may partly reflect the number of vulnerable clients accepted as a result of alcohol or drug misuse, debts, mental health needs, loss of employment and/or loss of benefits.

Table 1. Top Five Reasons for Homelessness 2013 to 2018

Reason	2013/14 (%)	2014/15 (%)	2015/16 (%)	2016/17 (%)	2017/18 (%)
Other e.g. emergency, rough sleeping	9	15	14	26	36
End of Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST)	12	15	28	26	30
Parents / Friends no longer able/willing to accommodate	13	20	16	17	27
Relationship breakdown – Violent and non-violent	21	26	20	19	17
Leaving Institution/Care	13	11	14	10	10

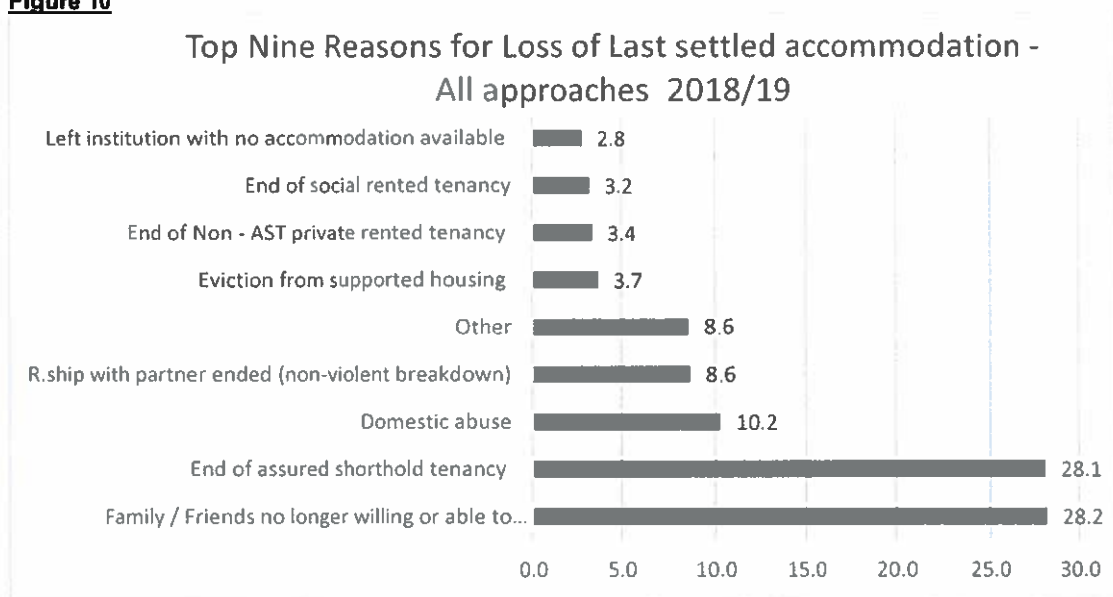
For the three years prior to the introduction of the HRA, the reason why more than one in five (22%) of all those households accepted as homeless became homeless, was **'End of Assured Shorthold Tenancy'**. Anecdotally this may have been due to some landlords simply not renewing ASTs rather than taking action for rent arrears or other tenancy breaches.

Of the remaining categories, **'Relationship Breakdown – violent'** was third highest with 15%; and **'Friend/Relative no longer able/willing unwilling to accommodate'** and **'Leaving Institution/Care'** were both responsible for a further 12% and 10% of accepted cases. This means that five categories accounted for more than three quarters of all the approved homeless cases between 2013 and 2018.

#### What were the main reasons for homelessness post HRA?

During 2018/19, the two main reasons why a household owed a duty and were homeless was: **Friends / family no longer able to accommodate** the household (28.2%) and the **End of an assured shorthold tenancy** (28.1%). This was more than double the next highest reason of **'Domestic Abuse'** at 10.2%; See Figure 10 below

**Figure 10**



While not directly comparable with pre HRA percentages, the total for **Domestic Abuse** (10.2%) and **Relationship with partner breakdown (non-violent)** (8.6%) are consistent with the levels previously recorded for Relationship breakdown (Violent and Non-Violent) of between 17% and 20% for the previous three years. The total shown for 'Other', has greatly reduced from 36% to 8.6% probably due to more accurate data recording.

Grouping the top four reasons for homelessness together, accounts for **75%** of all households assessed as being **'owed a duty'**

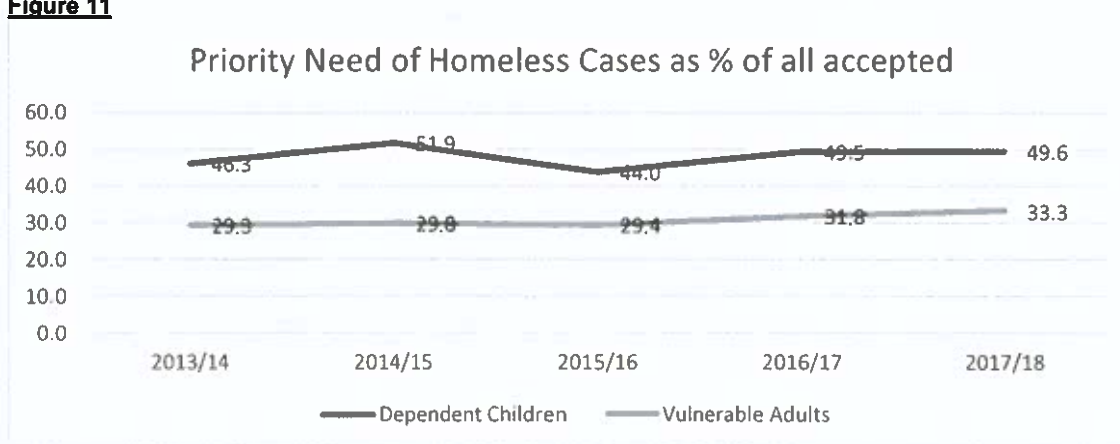
## Priority Need of households accepted as homeless

What was the main 'priority need' of homeless households pre HRA?

Prior to the introduction of the HRA, for a household to be accepted as homeless and be entitled to assistance they must have been in a 'priority need' category e.g. have had dependent child or children or be vulnerable in some other way.

For the five years prior to the HRA, the main 'priority need' of households in NS had been '*having dependent children*', ranging from 46% to 52% of all cases.

**Figure 11**



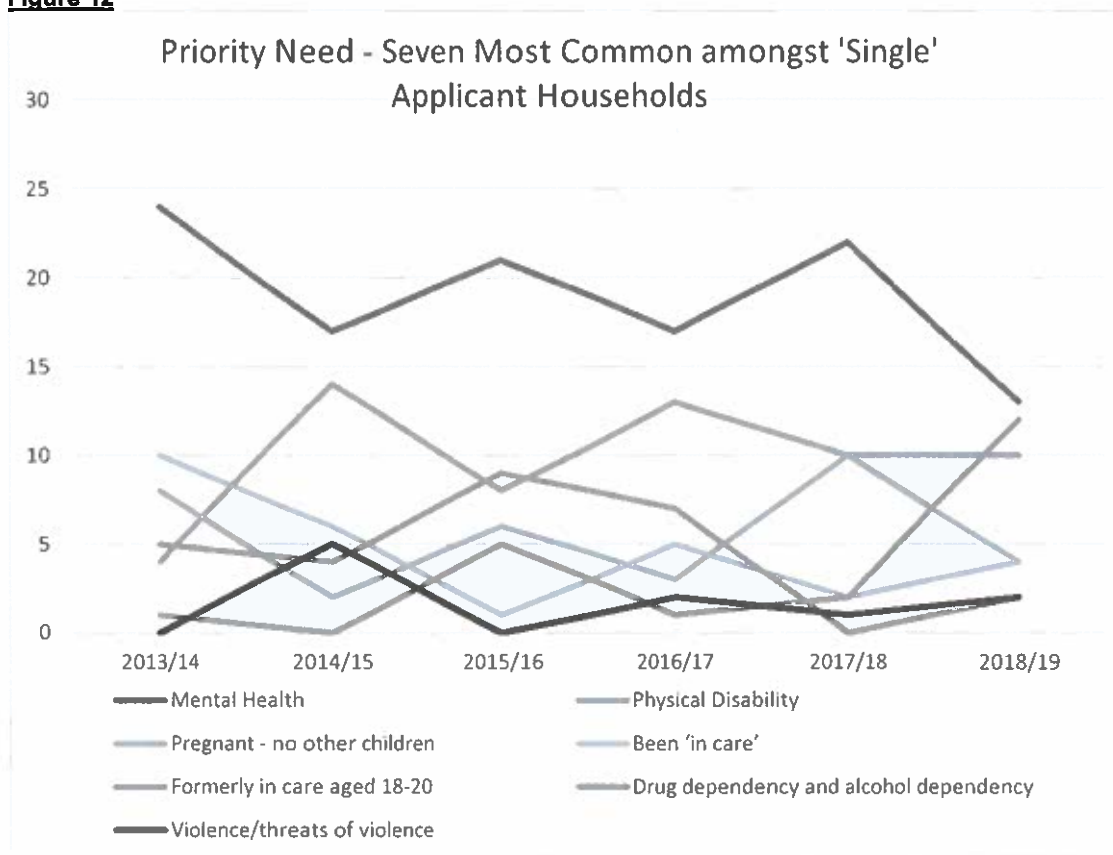
The next second highest category of priority need is vulnerable adults. Their vulnerability can be as a result of old age, physical disability or mental health issues. This category has steadily increased between 2013 and 2018 from 29.3% of cases to 33.3% as Figure 11 above shows.

### 'Priority Need' among Single Adult households?

Previous data has highlighted that there is a higher level in NS (compared to regional figures) of single adult household applications. The seven most common 'priority need' categories of single adult households, have been included in the chart shown in Figure 12 below. The chart confirms that mental health issues, physical disability and more recently 'drug (and/or) alcohol dependency' are the three biggest priority needs among 'singles'. Clearly, we will plan our services in the light of this.

Pre HRA, Mental Health and Physical Disability have been the main priority need of single adult households. Post HRA, whilst Mental Health has decreased from 22% to 13% of cases and remains the main 'priority need', **Drug and Alcohol dependency** have sharply increased from 2% to 12% of cases, to become the second main priority need.

**Figure 12**

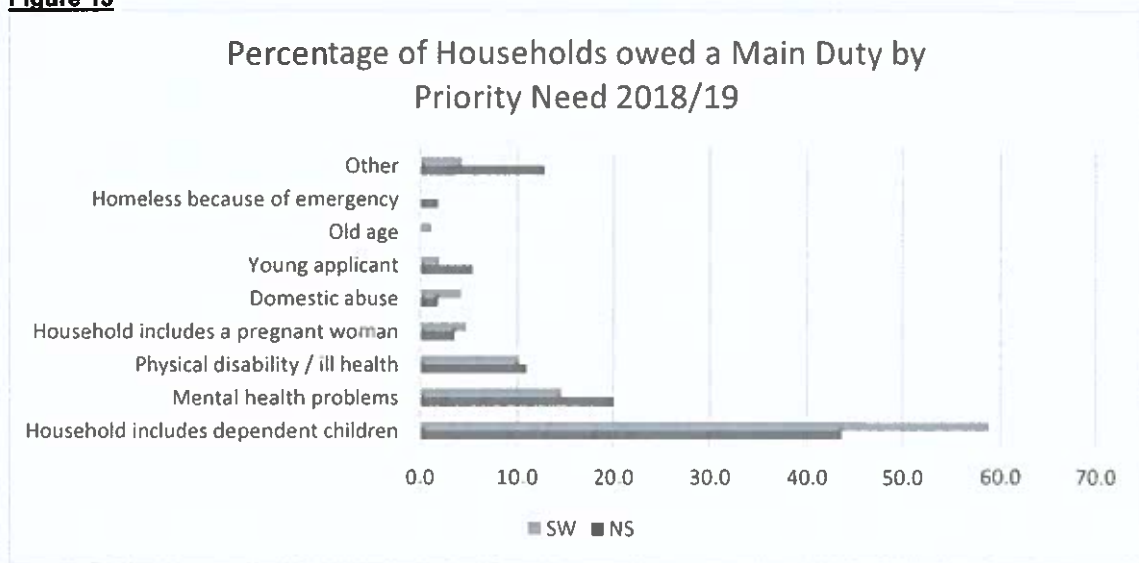


**What has been the main Priority Need of Homeless Households post HRA?**  
Since the introduction of the HPA, NSC has a duty to try and prevent or relieve homelessness for all applicants who are eligible for assistance and are homeless or threatened with homelessness, ***'irrespective of whether or not they may have a priority need for accommodation'***.

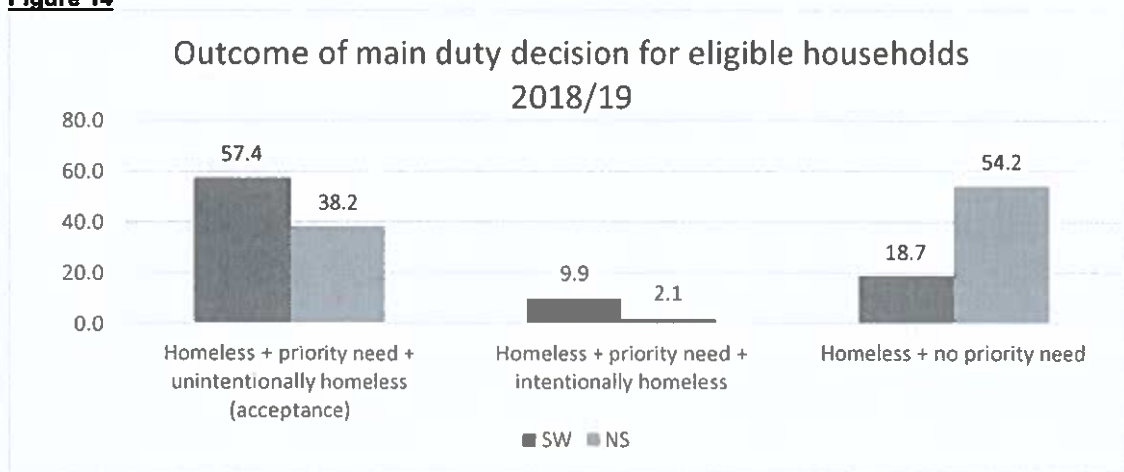
Where we have been unable to prevent an applicant from becoming homeless, or to help them to secure accommodation within the 'relief' stage, we are required to reach a decision as to whether the applicant has a priority need for accommodation. The decision on the household's priority need is based on 10 definitions including: dependent children, pregnancy, mental health issues etc.

As Figure 13 below shows, post HRA, the main priority need of households owed a main duty, was **households with dependent children 43.6%** (15% less than the regional figure) followed by **mental health problems at 20%**, which is higher than the South West level of 14.5%.

**Figure 13**



**Figure 14**



**What support needs do households have?**

We record the support needs of each household as part of their initial assessment of their HRA application. Some households have multiple needs and have each one recorded. The chart below, shows the main support needs expressed by households who were owed a Homelessness prevention or relief duty.

**Figure 15**

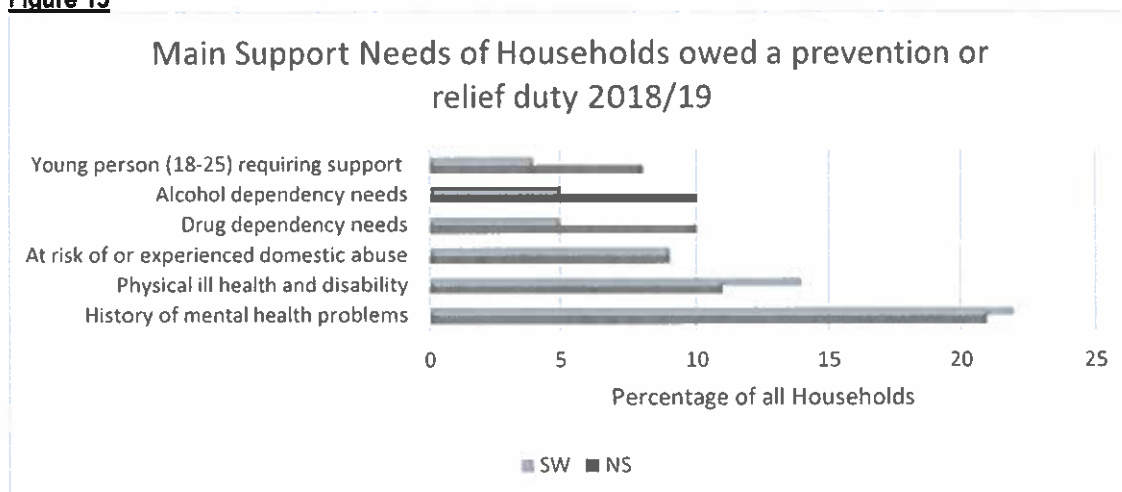


Figure 15 above shows the largest category of support need of households owed a duty in North Somerset is those who have a **history of mental health problems**, with **21%**, a similar figure to that of the SW region. Households with physical ill health and disability and those at risk of (or have experienced) domestic abuse, are the next two largest categories and again, are broadly similar to the SW region percentage. However, the next three categories of **Drug dependency, Alcohol dependency and Young person requiring support**, are all **twice** the regional figure and account for **28%** of all the support need expressed by households owed a duty in North Somerset;

## Temporary and Emergency access accommodation

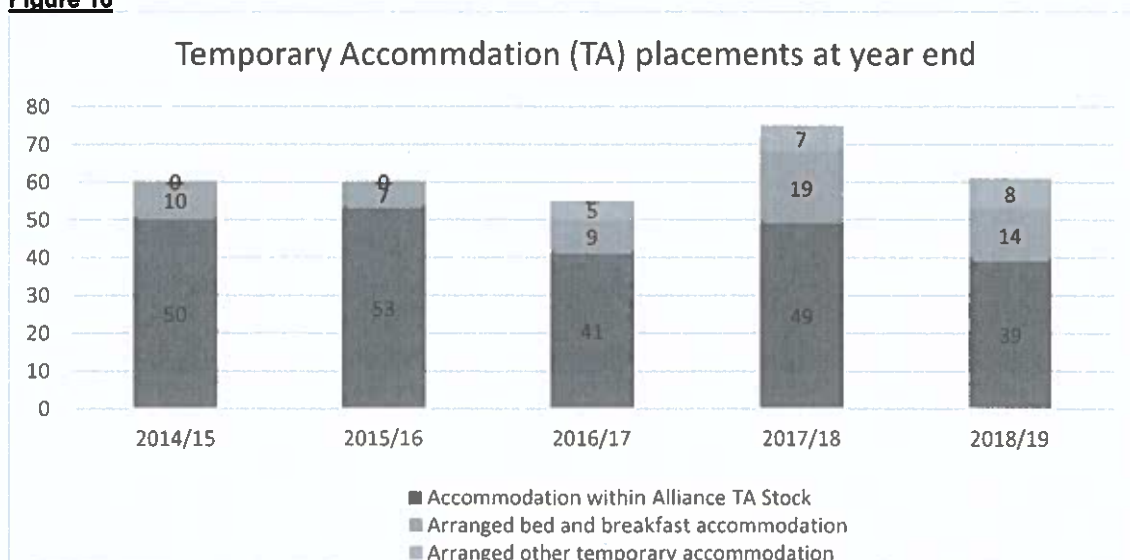
### What sort of Temporary Accommodation is provided?

Where it has not been possible to secure longer term housing options for some households, the use of Temporary Accommodation (TA) is required. TA for homeless households within NS is provided by one of our partner housing associations (Alliance Homes) and Emergency Accommodation via a small number of privately-owned bed and breakfast proprietors.

Our use of the Alliance TA has remained constant throughout the last 5 years, as we have tried to utilise the number of units made available to the full to minimise the use of emergency accommodation.

There was a **18.7% overall reduction** (to 61) of households in TA at the end of 2018/19; The use of Bed & Breakfast TA has also **reduced by 26.3%** in the last year; 'Other' TA (which includes placements with more specialised HA partners) has increased steadily over the last three years to 13.1% of placements as Figure 16 below shows

**Figure 16**



NSC are in the process of approving the use of an Open Framework contract for the supply of Emergency Accommodation for Homeless Households for the next four years. The contract structure is a 'multi-supplier open framework', that will enable the council to add suppliers during the term.

This framework approach will help the Council fulfil its requirement to provide emergency accommodation that meets the necessary standards, as well as manage the variation in demand for size and preferred location and length of time the accommodation is required.

The procurement process has confirmed a lack of provision of emergency access accommodation for the northern part of the district, but the flexibility and open nature of the framework will enable us to add suitable alternative suppliers to meet this shortfall at a later date.

## **Rough Sleeping**

In August 2018, the Government published its' new Rough Sleeping Strategy, followed by the Rough Sleeping Strategy, Delivery Plan in December 2018. The new strategy is committed to halving rough sleeping by 2022 and ending it by 2027. The intention is that this will be achieved through prevention, early intervention and support to help them rebuild their lives.

In its strategy, the Government sets out 61 Commitments to help achieve its target of no rough sleepers by 2027.

One of the commitments states:

We will work with the Local Government Association and local authorities so that by winter 2019:

- All local authorities update their strategies and re-badge them as Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies;

- Strategies are available on line;
- Local authorities report progress in delivering these strategies and publish annual Action Plans

Consequently, there has been a greater emphasis to collect and provide more data relating to rough sleeping within our area in order to help complete the Review.

**How many rough sleepers are there in North Somerset?**

Each week throughout the year, street counts are carried out by the YMCA outreach workers and members of the Homelessness prevention team, to monitor and engage with individuals who are in need of the multi-agency services available to them.

The chart at Figure 17 below shows the number of rough sleepers that have been recorded in North Somerset during our weekly counts, since April 2017. The chart confirms that while as many as 15 rough sleepers have been identified on a single night, there has been an **increasing trend in the average number** from 5.2 in 2017/18 to 8.4 in 2018/19;

**Figure 17**

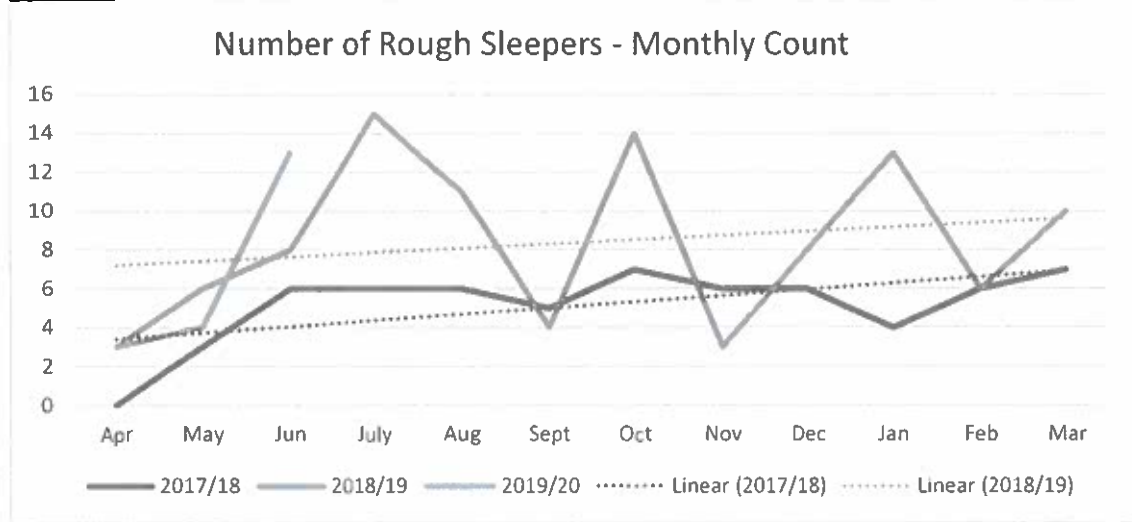
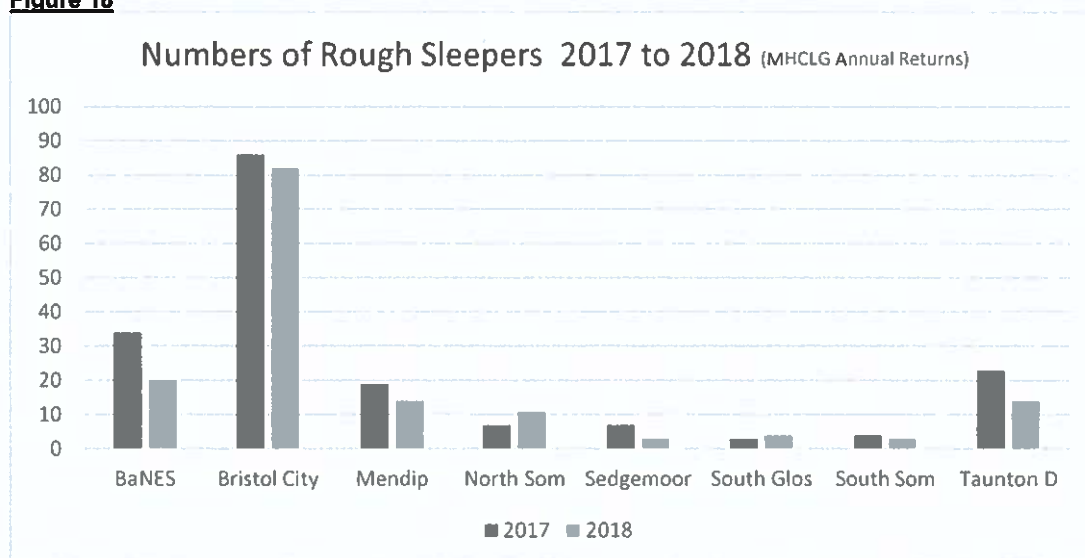


Figure 18 below shows the North Somerset and regional picture over the last two years.



**Figure 18**



Below, Table 2 gives a breakdown of the age groups of the rough sleepers in comparison to the region and as a national comparison England (outside London).

**Table 2**

	<b>Under 18</b>	<b>18-25</b>	<b>Over 26</b>	<b>Not known</b>
<b>England outside London</b>	0% (1)	7% (246)	82% (2,772)	11% (372)
<b>South West</b>	0% (0)	8% (36)	87% (400)	5% (22)
<b>North Somerset</b>	0% (0)	27% (3)	73% (8)	0% (0)

The notable section of Table 2 is the **18 to 25** age group, where North Somerset has **27%**, more than double the proportion in the SW or Rest of England. Because our total number of cases is small, the percentages tend to be larger, but there is a strong correlation between the figures for England and our sub-region;

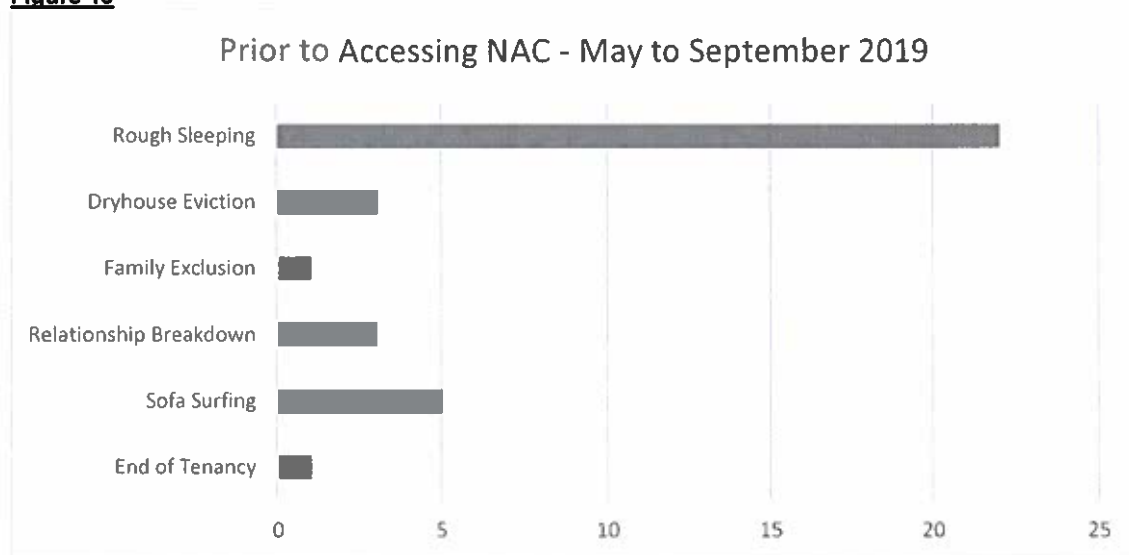
In May 2019, NSC were allocated £238,372 from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government following successful bids for Rough Sleeper Initiative and Rapid Rehousing Pathway funding. This funding is used to provide a range of support and outreach services for rough sleepers. The support has been provided by partner organisations led by the YMCA and delivered from the Night Assessment Centre / Somewhere to Go in Weston-Super- Mare town centre.

Initially the partnership, that also includes Weston Town Council, health professionals and the Police, was known as the Single and Street Homeless Partnership, but the co-ordinated approach has now been re-named as 'Street 2 Settled'.

The focussed work with rough sleepers that has evolved during in the last 12 months, has provided more information to give a better understanding about the needs of this group, that will better inform the services that are made available to them.

As Figure 19 below shows, between May and September 2019, 22 (64%) of the individuals who accessed services at the Night Assessment Centre were rough sleepers immediately before, with sofa surfing and Dry House eviction / Relationship breakdown, forming the next three highest categories;

**Figure 19**

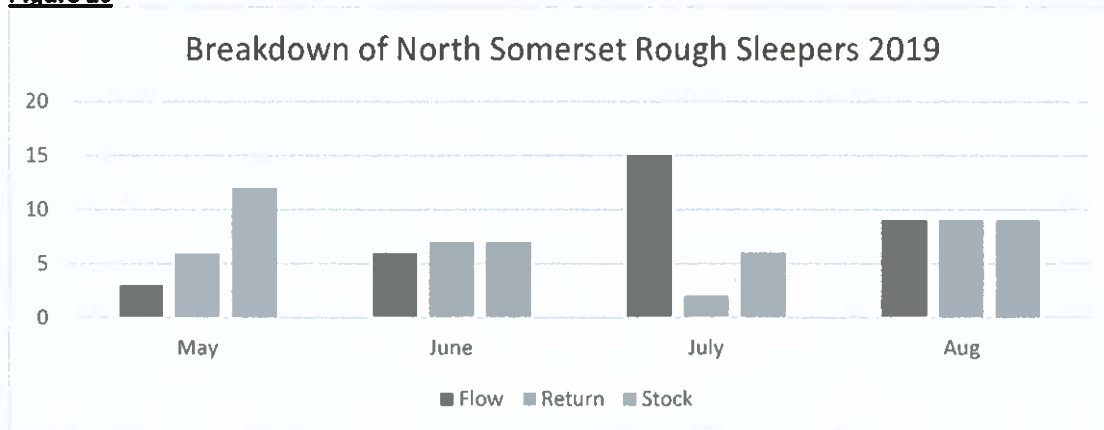


By carrying out a weekly street-count, a more accurate indication of the number of rough sleepers has been achieved. NSC uses and encourages the use of Streetlink, a service that allows anyone (including rough sleepers themselves) to connect rough sleepers with the services that are available to them in the local area, for example housing or health. As previously noted, the counts have identified as many as 15 rough sleepers out on a single night, but the average numbers that have been recorded are 5.2 for 2017/18 and 8.4 for 2018/19.

In the course of the regular counts, individuals are recorded to identify whether they are **'Flow'** (not known before); **'Returned'** (known to rough sleeping but on and off and not found on all counts); or **'Stock'** (entrenched and do not leave rough sleeping).

Figure 20 below shows the breakdown of the average Flow, Stock and Returned rough sleepers in the area between May and August 2019. There was a peak of 12 stock cases recorded in May and a peak of 15 Flow cases new to the area in July. But cumulatively, the number recorded in August (27) is the highest this year, probably influenced by the warmer weather.

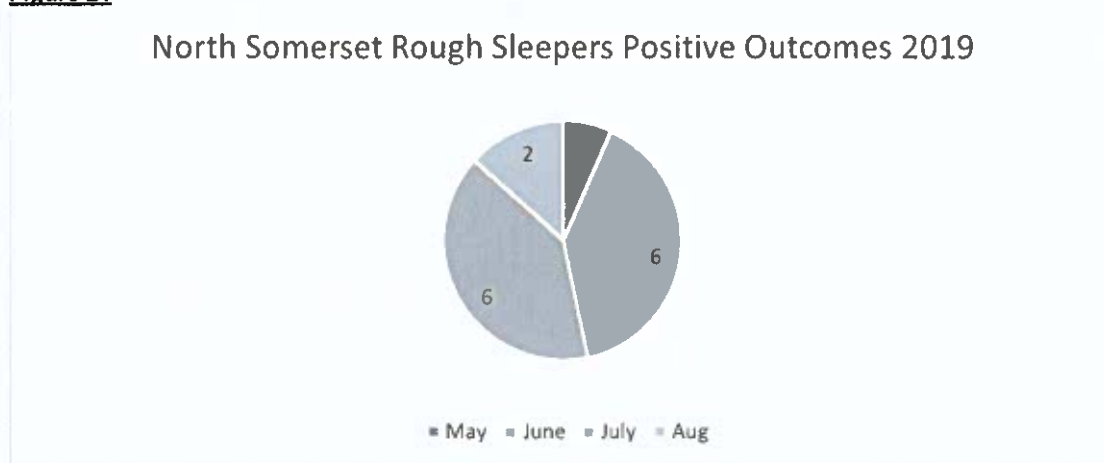
**Figure 20**



The weekly counts do not only record the numbers of rough sleepers. The exercise is used as an opportunity to engage with individuals, to record their details and encourage them to engage with the services that are made available to them.

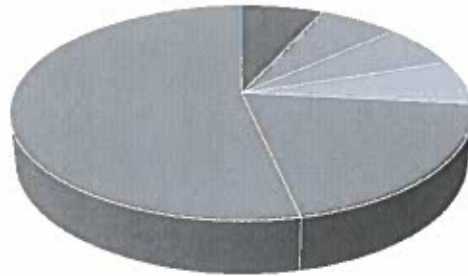
The intensive work that has been carried out to date with rough sleepers, has made a positive impact in many cases. Figure 21 below shows the total number of positive outcomes and Figure 22 that follows, shows a breakdown of the outcomes that have been achieved.

**Figure 21**



**Figure 22**

### Breakdown of Rough Sleepers Positive Outcomes North Somerset 2019



■ SP ■ PRS ■ Dryhouse ■ Further Duty Owed ■ Positive reconnection ■ Social Housing

## Appendix 2. Action Plan

Ref	PHS Actions and Performance measures	Target Date	Lead (and partners)
<b>Preventing Homelessness</b>			
PH1	To continue to make effective use of Discretionary Housing Payments to prevent homelessness and maintain tenancies	Ongoing	Housing Solutions
PH2	Continue to provide effective and timely advice which is outcome focussed for those in housing need, including continuing to fund independent advice agencies such as Citizens Advice	Ongoing	Housing Solutions, Homeless Prevention Team (HPT);
PH3	Seek further creative and innovative solutions to prevent homelessness, including using funding in a flexible manner	Ongoing	Housing Solutions
PH4	Tailoring personal housing plans to continue to meet individual circumstances, including access to skills and employment opportunities	Ongoing	HPT
PH5	Continue to meet the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act and evaluate outcomes and impact on resources	Ongoing	Housing Solutions
PH6	Further develop and strengthen multi-agency working, to enable joint initiatives and identify those at risk of homelessness, for example, those leaving prison or hospital, families, young people and care leavers	Ongoing	Housing Solutions, Street 2 Settled (S2S)
PH7	Develop a robust triage system, that provides a seamless service to case management and advice and improves customer experience	June 2020	HPT
PH8	Complete procurement of integrated ICT system for choice-based lettings and homelessness prevention, to improve the customer experience	Sept 2020	Housing Solutions, Contracts and Commissioning Team

PH9	Continue to share with partner agencies, approaches to mitigating the impact of welfare reforms and other financial pressures on low income families, to avoid difficulties with rent payments and rent arrears	Ongoing	Housing Solutions
PH10	Increase the number of households accessing tenancy support for those at risk of repeat homelessness	Dec 2020	Housing Solutions
PH11	Continue to work proactively with social and private landlords, to identify and support people at risk of homelessness and give support to sustain tenancies	Ongoing	Housing Solutions
<b>Ending Rough Sleeping</b>			
RS1	Explore funding options to continue to deliver successful RSI and RRP funded initiatives beyond 31 March 2020;	Ongoing	Housing Solutions, S2S
RS2	Evaluate RSI and RRP initiatives to determine those we wish to expand or reduce depending on success;	Feb 2021	Housing Solutions, S2S
RS3	Highlight good practice and continue to seek innovative solutions to end rough sleeping;	Ongoing	Housing Solutions, S2S
RS4	Continue to build and strengthen our proactive work with other agencies, the voluntary sector and faith organisations, to avoid duplication, raise the profile of services available and improve outcomes for rough sleepers;	Ongoing	Housing Solutions, S2S
RS5	Ensure our referral mechanisms are clear and understood by all partners;	Ongoing	Housing Solutions
RS6	Investigate the potential to develop a 'single point of giving' and publicise existing routes for charitable donations to discourage street begging;	Feb 2020	Housing Solutions, S2S

RS7	Develop a sensitive approach to bedding and personal belongings left on the street and seek accessible storage facilities;	Ongoing	Housing Solutions, S2S
RS8	Reduce the numbers sleeping rough and increase the number of rough sleepers engaging with services;	Ongoing	HPT, Housing Solutions, S2S
RS9	Continue to develop a person-centred approach, by considering all personal circumstances and tailoring interventions;	Ongoing	Housing Solutions, S2S
RS10	Progress supported 'move-on' accommodation for those ready to leave the night assessment centre, including options for female only supported housing provision for those with complex needs and vulnerabilities, as well as adopting Housing First principles where this is appropriate;	Sep 2020	Housing Solutions, Housing Development Team
RS11	Ensure our Severe Weather Emergency Protocol continues to be robust and is activated when needed and appropriate accommodation is available;	Ongoing	Housing Solutions, S2S
RS12	Work closer with addiction and mental health services when procuring services for rough sleepers and pool resources where appropriate in delivering services;	Ongoing	Housing Solutions
<b>Supporting Vulnerable Households</b>			
SV1	Work with colleagues in Contracts and Commissioning, to ensure new supported housing options for young people are successfully commissioned and the impact on current service users are minimised;	June 2020	Housing Solutions, Contracts and Commissioning Team
SV2	Improve the options available to applicants with complex needs;	Sept 2020	Housing Solutions, S2S
SV3	Identify other supported housing needs and evaluate existing accommodation provision;	June 2020	Housing Solutions, Housing Development team

SV4	Continue to work with our partner agencies to deliver outreach and advice services to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness;	Ongoing	Housing Solutions
SV5	Continue to refer vulnerable households to our tenancy support officer to help support them to sustain tenancies and access other services;	Ongoing	Housing Solutions
SV6	Increase case conferences for those identified as most vulnerable to fast track support services from health care professionals;	Ongoing	Housing Solutions
SV7	Work closely with housing providers to continue to identify those households most at risk of homelessness, so early intervention can take place;	Ongoing	Housing Solutions, Registered Housing Providers
SV8	Ensure our Allocation Policy is robust and up to date and those with support needs have the appropriate banding to access social housing;	Sept 2020	Housing Solutions
SV9	Build upon relationships with key partners including adult and children's services to increase support and accommodation options available;	Ongoing	Housing Solutions, S2S
<b>Increasing Affordable Housing Supply</b>			
AH1	Continue to work in partnership with registered housing providers and Homes England, to increase the number of affordable social housing homes built, to meet the demand of those households on our housing register;	Ongoing	Housing Development Team, Registered Housing Providers
AH2	Seek innovative solutions to develop move on and supported housing for households who are vulnerable and/or have complex needs;	Jan 2021	Housing Development Team
AH3	Use capital funding effectively to support development and achieve additional affordable homes over policy requirement, where appropriate and viable;	Ongoing	Housing Development Team



AH4	Contribute to the ambitions for regeneration and housing development opportunities within North Somerset by continuing to work closely with colleagues across the council	Ongoing	Housing Development Team
AH5	Continue to provide an accessible and efficient enabling service to registered providers, developers and other stakeholders, to assist in the development process;	Ongoing	Housing Development Team
AH6	Ensure the Council's Allocation Policy is kept up to date, to enable access to social housing for those in most need to bid through our choice-based lettings service – HomeChoice;	Ongoing	Housing Solutions
AH7	Complete procurement and full implementation of a new integrated ICT system for preventing homelessness and choice-based letting;	Sept 2020	Housing Solutions, Contracts and Commissioning Team
AH8	Reduce the number of days households stay in B & B or emergency accommodation, get more households into long term accommodation and review our temporary accommodation referrals process	Ongoing/June 2020	HPT
AH9	Complete the procurement of emergency accommodation provision;	Jan 2020	Housing Solutions, Contracts and Commissioning Team
AH10	Continue to deliver an excellent private lettings service, by increasing the number of landlords working with us to provide affordable and good quality private rented sector homes, on at least 12 months tenancies wherever possible;	Ongoing	Housing Lettings Team;
AH11	Seek to increase the number of landlords willing to take pets;	Ongoing	Housing Lettings Team;

AH12	Continue to use Hinkley Point C funding, to help increase accommodation in the private rented sector by giving incentives to landlords offering accommodation and seeking innovative solutions to allow those with limited income, to access private rented sector homes;	Ongoing	Housing Lettings Team;
AH13	Help ensure homes in the private rented sector are safe and good quality; by continuing to work closely with colleagues in our private rented standards team	Ongoing	Housing Lettings Team;
AH14	Continue to encourage empty property owners to consider renting their properties to those on the Home Choice register;	Ongoing	Housing Lettings Team, Private Sector Housing Team;
AH15	Promote the rent guarantee scheme to enable access to the private rented sector, for those under threat of homelessness;	Ongoing	Housing Lettings Team;

## Appendix 3.

### Responses to Consultation

<b>Q1. What do you feel are the (up to) 3 biggest challenges around preventing homelessness and / or rough sleeping in North Somerset?</b>		
	<b>Response</b>	<b>Comment</b>
1	Prison releases having no where to go upon release. Not enough accommodation for people suffering Mental ill health	We acknowledge the challenge and are actively working to provide accommodation for vulnerable groups in partnership with other agencies; The proposed Prevention actions and Support actions, highlight our commitment to continuing multi-agency approach;
2	The introduction of Universal Credit with its delay in initial payments has been a major factor in the increase in homelessness. This needs to be spelt out more clearly and lobbying government on this policy needs to be a priority.	Mitigating the impact of welfare reform (including Universal Credit) is included within the proposed Preventing Homelessness actions; reference to the lobbying work of the Local Government Association will be included within the Homelessness Review document;
3	Lack of support for people with mental health or addiction problems (we befriended a homeless man who clearly had both and just needed a safe place where he could be supported properly) Lack of affordable rental properties	This issue is covered in our proposed Ending Rough Sleeping Action to 'work closer with addiction and mental health services when procuring services for rough sleepers and pool resources where appropriate in delivering services'; We acknowledge the shortage of accommodation across all tenures and there are a number of proposed actions and priorities throughout the document that aim to address this;
4	Engaging with street community; Managing media and changing donations behaviour; Creating follow on accommodation	Increasing the number of rough sleepers engaging with services is included within our proposed Ending Rough Sleeping Actions; Raising the profile of services available to rough sleepers and can be included within the proactive work that we carry out in partnership with other agencies; Providing support to groups to create other options for donations can be added as an Ending Rough Sleeping action;
5	(1) Lack of genuinely affordable housing;	We acknowledge the shortage of accommodation across all tenures and there are a number of proposed actions and priorities throughout the document that aim to address this;
	(2) non-application of "Housing First" methodology	We refer to adopting 'Housing First' principles, when it is appropriate within the proposed Ending Rough Sleeping Actions;

	(3) No-fault eviction from private rented properties	No-fault' evictions are discussed in more detail within the review document;
6	1. When Temporary Accommodation referrals come through there is a lack of information given to allow an informed decision to be made. Can we ask that we are supplied with the personal housing plan with each referral we stress that this doesn't mean we will refuse people more often if we have more information up front, it means we can manage the risk more effectively and put appropriate support in place as we are seeing too many examples of things going wrong when we don't have all the information which may make us more risk averse going forward.	We acknowledge that we will review our Temporary Accommodation referrals process to address this issue;
	2. On page 7, there is mention of the problems of affordability especially for under 35s and also care leavers, however these does not mention the problem faced on some of the units of TA that are subject to high service charges, whilst we endeavour to assist in housing care leavers and other young people it does provide significant challenges around affordability	We acknowledge the difficulties referred to and will amend the document to make reference to the groups mentioned, occupying Temporary accommodation;

<b>Q2. Do you agree with the strategy's four proposed Priorities? Yes / No</b>	
<b>Response</b>	<b>Comment</b>

1	Rough sleeping will never be ended as for some people it is a choice	The perception that many rough sleepers are entrenched, should not deter us in including actions around building and strengthening our proactive work with other agencies, including the voluntary sector and faith organisations, to improve the outcomes for rough sleepers;
2	Yes	Acknowledged
3	Yes	Acknowledged
4	Yes	Acknowledged
5	Yes	Acknowledged
6	Yes	Acknowledged

<b>Q.3 Do you agree with the proposed Actions for each priority of the strategy? Yes / No</b>		
	<b>Response</b>	<b>Comment</b>
1	Yes	Acknowledged
2	Yes	Acknowledged
3	No I firmly believe the only way to end rough sleeping at get people off the streets is by the introduction of "Housing First" and "housing-led" principles	We acknowledge and refer to adopting 'Housing First' principles, when it is appropriate, within the proposed Ending Rough Sleeping Actions;
4	<u>1. Preventing Homelessness Actions</u> 1a There is a reference to employment and skills opportunities. If we supplied with their personal housing plan we would like this with Weston Works to help with priority.	We acknowledge that we can issue a copy of a Personal Housing Plan to a Registered Provider with the client's consent;

<p>1b It advocates taking partnership approaches to mitigating the impact of welfare reforms and other financial pressures on low income families, to avoid difficulties with rent payments and rent arrears, there is also on Page 22 discussion about the successful use of deposit bonds and cash deposits to secure PRS accommodation. It is a source of frustration that the Authority does not provide assistance to clients in the form of a deposit bond to those clients they refer to TA meaning that those individuals have to get themselves further into debt in order to fulfil their Rent in Advance obligations. Is there some scope for an agreed 'bond' arrangement to put into place that would mean that clients are not faced with increasing their levels of debt and that we are protected from potential financial losses when placing difficult clients within TA?</p>	<p>We acknowledge that we will review our Temporary Accommodation referrals process to address this issue;</p>
<p>1c Integrated CBL. As a significant financial stakeholder and main user of this system we have many examples of where we would consider the current system to fall short of ideal and therefore whilst we support the idea of a new system are worried that these will not be fully considered when purchasing something new. We would ask to be fully involved and informed about these processes and would like to ensure that the system not only meets the needs of the Authority but that it is fit for purpose from a stakeholder viewpoint. In effect we will be paying a significant proportion of the cost of the package through fees but may be not involved in what the system can do to help us better let our properties. We would also like to be made aware of the time frame for this project.</p>	<p>We acknowledge the importance of involving, and reflecting the views of, all registered providers and stakeholders when undertaking the planned procurement of a new Choice Based Letting IT system. A formal engagement process will be started during early 2020;</p>
<p>2 <u>Ending Rough Sleeping</u> - we agree</p>	<p>Acknowledged</p>
<p>3 <u>Supporting Vulnerable Households</u> - we agree</p>	<p>Acknowledged</p>
<p>4 - <u>Increasing the supply of affordable housing</u></p>	<p>For clarification, the document will be amended to read: 'Reduce the number of days households stay in B&amp;B or emergency accommodation'</p>
<p>4a There is no mention of reducing the use of B&amp;B accommodation surely this should be a priority</p>	

<p>4b There is no mention of reducing the use of out of area hostel type accommodation such as units within Bristol, surely this should be a priority?</p>	<p>Our action to reduce the number of days that households stay in B&amp;B or emergency accommodation, includes out of area accommodation;</p>
<p>4c You talk about reducing stays in TA but there is no mention of how or with what resources. As the main provider of TA, do we need to consider the reduction and a different use of the TA units within our stock in our longer-term plans and strategies?</p>	<p>Our proposal to reduce of the use of B&amp;B and Emergency accommodation is likely to maintain the demand for the Temporary Accommodation provided by our main Registered Provider partner;</p>
<p>4d There seems to be a significant conflict between the aspiration to reduce the use of TA and to procure emergency accommodation. We assume that this may be around formalising arrangements with the existing emergency accommodation providers rather than continuing on an spot purchase basis but if it is not, we are worried that many vulnerable people with children will end up placed in emergency accommodation on a night by night basis, rather than being placed in a relatively secure contractual tenancy where they can take a few months to re-establish themselves and seek to move forward again.</p>	<p>The Emergency accommodation procurement exercise recently undertaken, has been to formalise arrangements with suppliers;</p>
<p>4e There is a proposed action to "continue to use empty homes for accommodating people from the housing register". It would be useful for context to know how successful that has been in the past and what kind of numbers have been achieved. In the same way that the increasing use of PRS has been quantified earlier on the document</p>	<p>The action refers to continuing to 'encourage' empty property owners to consider renting....</p>

<p><b>Q.4 The Government has placed an emphasis via the Duty to Refer, for 'Specified Public Bodies' to assist in reducing homelessness. <u>If you represent one of these Public Bodies</u>, please state how your organisation can help meet the strategy's proposed actions</b></p>	
<p><b>Response</b></p>	<p><b>Comment</b></p>
<p>1 Although not a "specified public body" I regularly refer homeless and those threatened with being homeless</p>	<p>Acknowledged</p>

2	We fully embrace the duty to refer and will be reviewing all our existing policies and practices. Where appropriate we will be completing a referral when required. We are planning on getting this piece completed this year and will use our existing liaison meetings to discuss with North Somerset Council homeless team	Acknowledged
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<b>Q5. Do you have any further comment that you would like to make about the draft strategy?</b>		
	<b>Response</b>	<b>Comment</b>
1	1. Could the empty houses issue be strengthened by introducing council tax penalties for empty homes? 2. Where is our emergency accommodation located? Is there enough in each locality? There needs to be more temporary accommodation close to people's previous home, especially for households with children.	1. The introduction of increased premiums for properties that have been empty for more than two years is due for consideration; 2. The majority of our temporary accommodation is provided by Alliance Homes and is located throughout the district for the reasons mentioned. When no temporary accommodation is available, we utilise B&B. We have recently carried out a tender exercise for emergency accommodation provision and have highlighted the need for accommodation throughout the district (particularly in the north of the district).
2	No	Acknowledged
3	One aspect of the strategy missing is the winning of hearts and minds and managing the media. Many well meaning donations are given to the street community which gives less incentive for the street community to access services. The gift of food on the street dissuades people from going to day centres to get hot food as they can sit on the street and be fed there. A media campaign to educate the public on how to give effectively providing access points in the town for this to happen, donating to charities rather than the individual	Raising the profile of services available to rough sleepers can be included within the proactive work that we carry out in partnership with other agencies; Providing support to groups to create other options for donations can be added as a proposed Ending Rough Sleeping action;



4	<p>There is only a passing reference to "Housing First" - yet is the proven solution in so many countries. We cannot wait another 5 years before North Somerset Council adopts "Housing First" otherwise numbers rough sleeping on our streets will continue to grow.</p>	<p>We acknowledge and refer to adopting 'Housing First' principles, when it is appropriate, within the proposed Ending Rough Sleeping Actions;</p>
5	<p>We welcome this review and fully support its implementation going forward but we have the following comments to help improve it from a stakeholder point of view:</p>	
	<p>1. We have only had 21 days to make comments on this, normally expecting documents of this type and importance to have a longer consultation period. It says they can only deliver through a partnership approach and yet we are getting an extremely short time to make comment.</p>	<p>Our existing Preventing Homelessness Strategy was consulted on for a longer period. The proposed document is a 'rebadge' and update of the existing strategy that includes specific references to Rough Sleeping and an update of the actions plan;</p>
	<p>2. There is no mention of funding or resources throughout the strategy to achieve any of the proposed actions, whilst it infers that the Proposed Actions will be formulated into detail targets with timescales and identified owners, there is no mention of resources. What potential resources have been identified to deliver these actions or will they remain as aspirations.</p>	<p>We will update and highlight text to include resources available;</p>
	<p>3. On Page 8 we only have the key facts from the recent homelessness review, the full Homelessness Review is not available, so it makes it hard to be able to comment in light of the full context of homelessness.</p>	<p>The Homelessness review will be an appendix to the main document, giving greater statistical detail;</p>
	<p>4. There is reference on page 12 about each homeless approach having a Personal Housing Plan, however as recipient of TA referrals we don't get to see this, it would be useful in all cases were clients are referred for TA for a copy of their personal Housing plan to be included with the referral. This would help us get a clearer understanding of the clients needs and challenges so as to ensure that we can offer the best support and increase the chances of creating a successful tenancy.</p>	<p>We acknowledge that we can issue a copy of a Personal Housing Plan to a Registered Provider with the client's consent;</p>

	<p>5. There is reference on Page 22 that "we do not use hostel accommodation". Whilst this may be technically correct within the strictest definition of "hostel accommodation" we think that this does not really reflect the experience of many customers who will be placed in emergency overnight hostel-type accommodation. It may be useful in your final document to be more explicit over the definition of properties that you use for homeless cases and to give a full breakdown of the numbers placed in different types. For instance, our understanding is that there are many placements made to some B&amp;Bs, Ashcombe Rd and to Bristol which may be better reflected in the document</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>I have real concern about the Welfare Reform, specifically universal credit and the impact on households who are vulnerable being able to make rent payments. Would you advocate NSC lobbying on any change about that to central government or do you not anticipate any change to this approach?</p>

The definition of the term 'hostel accommodation' will be clarified in the Homelessness review, which will also give a breakdown of the different types of accommodation used and the number of households owed a main homelessness duty that we have accommodated;

Mitigating the impact of welfare reform (including Universal Credit) is included within the Preventing Homelessness proposed actions; reference to the lobbying work of the Local Government Association will be included within the Homelessness Review document;

## **Glossary of Terms – To Be completed prior to publication**

