

Appendix 2

Review of progress against 2019-20 Action Plan

Background

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities to review homelessness, and the influencing factors that cause homelessness, and to develop a strategy which addresses the findings of the review.

Our 2017-2022 Homelessness Strategy for South Hams and West Devon has been designed to address changes in national policy, reductions in government spending, changes in demography in the area and the impact of the 2013 Welfare reform Bill, 2012 localism Bill and 2017 Homeless Reduction Act.

The Key Priorities for the Homelessness Strategy

The review of homelessness in South Hams and West Devon identified four key priorities to reduce and prevent homelessness.

These are:

- Understanding the True Cost of Homelessness
- Access to Housing
- Access to Services
- Health and Wellbeing

These four key priorities form the basis of the strategy and the annual Action Plan. Our 2020-2021 Action plan has been developed following a review of the progress made to date on our existing 2019-20 Action plan.

Progress to date

The review of the 2019-20 Action Plan demonstrates the positive progress made against our targets for the year. At this stage in the delivery of our strategy, many projects that have been established now form part of our ongoing work. Whilst we can confirm that good progress has been made on the actions for the year certain elements of our action plan have been hampered by the recent Covid-19 pandemic and our ongoing delivery of services has needed to flex to support both new ways of working and emerging trends and issues relating to the impact of the virus.

Review of 2019-20 Action Plan

Understanding the True Cost of Homelessness

- In the year 2019-20 348 Households were prevented from becoming homeless in South Hams and 228 in West Devon.
- Our Money Advice Contract assisted 174 households across South Hams and West Devon in the financial year 2019/2020 and brought in excess of £177,600 in previously unclaimed benefits and other entitlements.

- Our DCC commissioned tenancy support service has worked with ** households. (Awaiting figures from provider – will be updated asap)
- Less than 0.5% rent arrears levels across the portfolio of properties managed by SeaMoor lettings.
- Worked with registered providers to develop a rent in advance scheme that can meet the needs of both the provider and the tenant; enabling tenants to build up the security of an advance payment over time alongside financial advice to ensure feasibility.
- Developed a direct referral method to ensure those in arrears in housing association properties are able to access support at an early stage.

Access to Services

- Training in referrals process for partner agencies maintained at a high level with training delivered to Adult Services, DV services and those in the voluntary sector; to ensure the process is embedded in partner agency service delivery. Regular training delivered to partner agencies to ensure that referral processes are understood and that the focus on a preventative approach to homelessness is maintained
- Increased early identification of those at risk of homelessness within the social housing sector through improved joint working.
- Communication with landlords improved across commercial letting agent sector through frequent contact and evidenced positive outcomes following joint working.
- Homelessness information and advice has been delivered to approximately 710 students in South Hams and 750 in West Devon to ensure young people are equipped to access services. [See Appendix 4]

Access to Housing

- Seamoor lettings scheme poised to manage council owned properties and involved in the development of longer term housing investment opportunities.
- Leasehold arrangement established to facilitate the provision of a high standard 6 bedroom HMO accommodation to those in need of affordable shared accommodation.
- Rough sleeper count reduced from 7 to 1 in South Hams
- 16 rough sleepers supported into long term housing.
- Housing first model developed with Livewest generating provision of 4 properties for housing first use over the coming 2 years.

- 54 Households identified as requiring disabled adapted accommodation. Housing needs met for 31 households. Currently work is focussed on the remaining 15 households in South Hams and 8 households in West Devon requiring adapted accommodation.
- Two Temporary Accommodation Support officers recruited and in post to provide high level support to those in temporary accommodation to facilitate effective move on.
- Having explored the Homes for Cathy project with Registered Providers a number have signed up to the commitment. We have established that all of the housing providers we work with there is an appetite to work towards the general goals but for some a more flexible approach to this is preferred. We are working with Livewest to deliver the housing element of our rough sleeper project.

Health and Wellbeing

- Working in partnership with Marketplace Ministries we have produced a Tenancy Ready Training Scheme to support rough sleepers in their transition into long term accommodation.
- Feasibilities studies commenced into the provision of specialist housing for those with learning difficulties in partnership with Devon County Council.
- H&W panel for adapted housing - 31 households identified and resolved and additional 251 adaptations made to enable people to remain in their homes.
- Through the Disabled Adapted need panel and Health and Wellbeing we have been using the data from Devon Home Choice to identify households in high and medium housing need that have specific housing requirements. This information is shared with the affordable housing time who are looking to integrate these properties into new development plans.

Actions to be rolled over as incomplete:

- Homelessness forum – booked for mid-March 2020 but cancelled due to pandemic. Options for future forum formats to be considered.
- Landlord Bulletin – 1st edition created early this year. Dissemination paused due to conflicting guidance released relating to renters in response to the Covid 19 Pandemic.
 - Bespoke advice around changes made as a result of Covid 19 delivered across the borough. All 'park home'

establishments contacted to ensure compliance and to reduce the risk of homelessness.