

The 2017-22 Joint Homelessness Strategy set out the priorities for tackling homelessness in South Hams & West Devon. The strategy was framed around four themes:

- Understanding the true cost of homelessness
- Access to services
- Access to housing
- Health and wellbeing

A review of the progress made against these priorities has been conducted to support the development of the 2022-27 Homelessness Strategy.

### **Priority 1: Understanding the True Cost of Homelessness**

Key Aims	Progress made
Ensure we establish a solid evidence base which informs practice across all sectors and clearly illustrates the true cost of homelessness in South Hams and West Devon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implemented a new bespoke housing system which enables cross examination of data collected from homeless applicants.</li> <li>• Data sharing agreements established with Children’s services and improved referral routes and working practices established to better track trends and identify need among care leavers and families.</li> </ul>
Monitor the impact of welfare reform, and ensure that this informs future strategic priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted use of Discretionary Housing Payments to ensure homelessness is central to the approach of the housing benefit</li> <li>• Close working with Environmental Health on energy improvements, property adaptations and reduction in housing running costs.</li> </ul>
Recognise the continuing pressures on the Councils’ budgets and how best to target resources in the most meaningful way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted partnership working practices with social landlords to ensure tenants with rent arrears are identified at an early stage and supported and homelessness prevented.</li> <li>• Bespoke financial advice service in place to ensure customers receive tailored advice and are supported to access services. Contract has delivered financial gains of £211,021 in South Hams and £76,544 in west Devon in the period April 2020 – July 2021.</li> <li>• Tenants incentive Scheme revised and regularly promoted to ensure best use of existing stock</li> </ul>
Ensure partnerships with other agencies demonstrate value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing review with DCC regarding the supported Living contract.</li> <li>• Joint bid with TDC to secure funds for rough sleepers and 3 joint posts to ensure best VFM</li> <li>• Close monitoring of Homemaker Contract</li> </ul>
Ensure access to good quality financial advice to help tackle poverty, poor quality housing and homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procured a new contract with Homemaker to deliver Income Maximisation, budgeting, benefits and debt advice</li> <li>• Extended the contract to 5 days a week in response to the Covid Impact on people’s finances.</li> </ul>

## **Priority 2: Access to Services**

Key Aims	Progress made
Offer advice and assistance in a range of formats, so the customer can choose how they communicate with their Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implemented bespoke online portal account system to facilitate communication and document sharing.</li> <li>• Expanded offer of telephone assessment services to ensure customers in remote locations are not required to travel to access services.</li> <li>• Updated and maintained web pages to ensure information is available in plain English and includes links to additional support resources</li> <li>• Worked closely with the Devon Home Choice partnership to enable more effective access to the Devon Home Choice system via an app designed specifically for phone us.</li> </ul>
Ensure our most vulnerable customers are able to access advice services effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed close relationships with support services to ensure vulnerable customers are able to access support with making homeless applications.</li> <li>• Communication software technology ensure that calls and assessments with customers can include support workers or family members in the same call.</li> </ul>
Work with partners to ensure that we are able to offer services at the time and place our customers need them most	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication software technology ensure that calls and assessments with customers can occur at a time and location that best suits the customer and their support network.</li> <li>• Training delivered to multiple partner agencies to ensure a good basic understanding of housing and homelessness exists across a wide range of agencies. Enabling basic advice and information to be sourced from a wide range of places and to ensure excellent referral routes where additional support and advice is needed.</li> </ul>
Readily and regularly consult with our customers and stakeholders to make sure we get our services right	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regularly attending community groups including Caring Town, The Hub and ROOF.</li> <li>• Consult yearly with stakeholders on the progress of the strategy and the future needs for local housing.</li> <li>• Introduced a G&amp;T Forum to engage with the Traveller communities to find out their needs and we can do to meet these.</li> </ul>

## **Priority 3: Access to Housing**

Key Aims	Progress made
Increase the supply, standard and options for people who face homelessness within our area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased promotion and communications program to support the recruitment of local landlords to the Seamoor property scheme.</li> <li>• Capital grant funding secured to enable purchase of 4 one bedroom homes to improve housing options for single homeless rough sleeping or at risk of.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established Disabled Adaptation Panel which has been instrumental in securing the most appropriate housing options for those in need of adapted housing for XX households</li> <li>Developed a bespoke website to advertise rented accommodation options through SeaMoor and part ownership housing options available locally.</li> <li>Appointed a project officer to</li> <li>Established a perpetrator housing programme to support victims of domestic abuse to remain in their own home and alternate housing be sought for the perpetrator.</li> </ul>
Develop innovative options for our Rough Sleeper Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint bid with TDC to secure Outreach workers, personal budgets and housing first options.</li> <li>Successfully implemented the TAS worker to help support rough sleepers with moving on</li> <li>Successfully bid for funding for an additional support worker for the Leap Pad project</li> <li>Successfully bid for £250K toward the purchase of 4 units of Leap Pad accommodation.</li> <li>Improved communication and partnership working with Local Charities and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations to ensure that a holistic approach is taken to meeting Rough Sleepers support and engagement needs.</li> </ul>
Continue the downward use of temporary accommodation for homeless households	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The use of temporary accommodation has fluctuated throughout the 5 year strategy. Reductions in stays in temporary accommodation were achieved in the initial 3 years of the strategy. Supported by input from out temporary accommodation support workers. However, subsequently the Covid pandemic has impacted on the availability of accommodation for applicants to move to resulting in longer stays in temp. This has been caused by a combination of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delays in building development due to lockdown measures</li> <li>Reduction in movement across the social and private housing sector due to a stay in evictions and a limitation on movements.</li> <li>Demand for holiday accommodation in the district has led to an increase in use of rental accommodation for holiday use.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

#### **Priority 4: Health and Wellbeing**

Key Aims	Progress made
Work in partnership with our voluntary and statutory sectors to holistically address people's needs as	Appointed a dedicated Vulnerable Person's Officer and a Rough sleeper outreach worker to work alongside our housing advice officers to facilitate excellent links to partner agencies to include joint working on homeless cases.

fully as possible.	
Ensure we adequately protect and safeguard the most vulnerable members of our community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewed internal Safeguarding procedures and rolled out training to ensure safeguarding is 'Everyone's responsibility'</li> <li>• Developed good working relationships with Hospital discharge coordinators, prison release officers, probation, domestic abuse, adult and children's social work and mental health.</li> <li>• Engaged closely with children's services</li> </ul>
Enable early help, to avoid crisis and tackle homelessness at its root cause.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed referral routes with Hospital discharge coordinators, prison release officers, probation, domestic abuse, adult and children's social work and mental health social care, local police and registered providers to ensure early identification of households at risk of homelessness.</li> </ul>

Rough sleeper strategy	
Increase our knowledge of the number of people sleeping rough by building on the annually required rough sleepers estimate by introducing a quarterly rough sleeper estimate. This will ensure that the service delivery can respond more quickly to need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduced monthly rough sleeper counts/estimates</li> <li>• Introduced a next working day response to reports of people sleeping rough wherever possible.</li> </ul>
The very nature of homelessness means a large proportion of the people requiring housing advice and homeless services will be vulnerable and may need additional support to enable them to access services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduced TAS worker</li> <li>• Introduced Outreach workers</li> <li>• Introduced specialist Drug and Alcohol Outreach workers</li> <li>• Introduced a multiagency hub</li> </ul>
Housing options for those with a history of rough sleeping need to be innovative and reflect the needs of the individual. The Local Authority seeks to achieve this through the provision of multiple housing options which will be tailored to meet the needs of the individual.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduced the Leap Pad (Housing First) accommodation model</li> <li>• Worked with Private Landlords to encourage them to accept tenants with a history of chaotic behaviour and rough sleeping</li> <li>• Worked with Social Landlords in line with the Where's Cathy ethos to encourage them to accept tenants with a history of chaotic behaviour and rough sleeping</li> </ul>
Tackling homelessness takes more than just the provision of a house, if we are to maximise the opportunities for our most	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed a multi-agency hub in partnership with Teignbridge District Council comprised of outreach workers, a hub coordinator, drug and alcohol support services, MH services, probation and adult social care to</li> </ul>

vulnerable people. Often, poor health, addictions and unhealthy lifestyles mean that people are unable to secure, and maintain, accommodation for themselves or their families.	ensure that all potential solutions are considered around the clients support needs and to ensure a client centred approach to developing those plans.
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### **Proposed way forward**

Our Joint Housing Strategy 2022-27 will seek to meet the identified housing needs of those people in our community. In order to do so we have identified four priority groups around which our strategy will be framed allowing us to focus on the challenges that each group experiences and to best meet the resulting need. These groups are Single/couple households, Families, Households with additional needs and Rough Sleepers.

### **The Housing Picture**

In South Hams, 8.2% of properties are second homes, with up to 50% in some areas. In West Devon 2.1% are second homes. In 2019 there were 67 properties identified as being long term empty in South Hams and 27 in West Devon.

Since 2016/17, South Hams has enabled 483 units of new affordable housing and 95 units in West Devon

Average house price in South Hams is £440,139; a 25% increase since 2016 (Sept 2016 - £331,625) and the average house price in West Devon is £306,203; a 22% increase (Sept 2016 - £239,160) (Source - Land Registry 2020)

Average salary in South Hams £30,160 in 2020, an increase of 9% since 2016. In West Devon the average salary is 22,048, an increase of 11% since 2016. (Source: ONS 2020)

The ratio of lower quartile house price to lower quartile gross earnings has correspondingly increased such that it is now 11 times the average earnings in South Hams and 10.42 in West Devon. (ONS).

**The People Picture** - Between April 2018 – March 2021 South Hams has had 1914 approaches and West Devon 1159.

#### **Single and couple households**

Of those 78% and 75% respectively have been from households requiring one bedroom or shared accommodation.

For those requiring one bedroom accommodation the average case duration was 82 days.

Within the same time period 32% of approaches have been from those aged 18-34 years old; for whom the shared accommodation rate applies. In West Devon this figure was 38%. The main reason for approach within this age group was 'Asked to leave by friends or family' and Sofa Surfing'.

43% of one bedroom households in the South Hams secured housing outside the district. In West Devon 33% of one bed households were housed outside the borough.

Of those single households who were housed in shared accommodation only 35% were able to source shared accommodation within the South Hams, with 59% successfully securing shared accommodation in West Devon.

### **Families**

Within the same time period in South Hams 427 families approached for assistance and 291 in West Devon. The primary reason for approach across both local authorities for families was 'receipt of a Section 21 notice' with the second most common reason being 'fleeing domestic abuse'.

On average it has taken more than 4 weeks longer to secure housing for families (average 113 days) than for those requiring one bedroom accommodation.

In the South Hams 76% of families successfully secured housing within the district of South Hams. In West Devon 63% families were housed within the borough.

### **Additional Needs**

The Disabled facilities grants have successfully supported 334 households in South Hams and 182 households in West Devon to remain in their own home through provision of adaptations.

The Disabled adapted panel has supported 50 households to secure appropriate adapted accommodation through targeted work with RP's on their housing stock as it becomes available.

23 households in South Hams and 21 households in West Devon people still remain on the housing list in need of wheelchair adapted accommodation. A new project has commenced to identify and target those households with a need for other adaptations or specific accommodation types.

In the South Hams 31% of households approaching identified themselves as having additional support needs. In West Devon it was 29%.

Mental Health needs accounted for 54% of those identifying as having additional needs in South Hams and 50% in West Devon. 45% of households in South Hams identified a physical disability support need and 39% in West Devon. Other support needs identified include Drug and/or alcohol misuse, feeling abuse of violence and being a care leaver or young person made homeless.

99 households across the two areas identified themselves as having 3 or more support needs.

The population of the South Hams and West Devon includes an above average proportion of people over the age of 65. The national average being 18.9% whilst in South Hams the figure is 29.2% and in West Devon 28.8%. The proportion of older people in the area means that the demand for carers is high. Devon County Council have identified that across the county they require around 2000 additional care workers to meet the need. The average care worker salary in Devon is £20894, significantly below the District average in the South Hams and below the average for West Devon making housing unaffordable across both areas.

### **Rough Sleepers**

In South Hams 86 rough sleepers were worked with by South Hams, of these 60 identified as having rough slept previously and 9 individuals have had repeat cases with us. In West Devon there were 36 rough sleepers with 27 of these stating they had been homeless before and 4 individuals have had repeat cases.

Successful outcomes were recorded for 37 rough sleepers in the South Hams and for in 16 rough sleepers in West Devon.

Of the 86 rough sleepers approaching South Hams 54% identified themselves as having support needs with 36% identifying mental health as a specific need. In West Devon 40% of rough sleepers identified as having support needs with 27% specifying a physical disability as a support need.