

Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils

Joint Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy



2019 - 2024



Foreword

Preventing Homelessness is a priority for Babergh and Mid Suffolk Councils. Everyone needs somewhere to live and a place that they can call home.

Our vision is to end rough sleeping in our Districts, work with clients as early as possible to prevent homelessness occurring, further reduce the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation, support households to secure accommodation in the private sector and ensure that every person contacting our service receives the same level of in-depth advice and assistance to resolve their housing crisis.

This strategy highlights the achievements the Councils have made since the previous strategy (2013-2018) including successfully helping families to access accommodation in the private sector, reducing the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation, bringing empty homes back into use, and developing and acquiring additional properties to add to our housing stock. A significant number of residents have also been assisted by the Housing Solutions service and homelessness has been prevented or relieved (alternative accommodation successfully sourced) in over 2600 cases.

However, homelessness is still at risk of occurring regularly for many of our residents and we are pleased to be able to present this strategy, which will drive the development of the Housing Solutions service over the next five years to ensure homelessness is prevented wherever possible.

With key partners and stakeholders, including those from the voluntary sector, we have developed six key priorities within this Strategy with associated actions to enable us to deliver on our vision for the service over the next five years.



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Introduction

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are required under the Homelessness Act 2002 to carry out a review of homelessness in their Districts and formulate a homelessness strategy based on the results of that review. Babergh and Mid Suffolk are required to publish the strategy and carry out a further review within five years.

The current Homeless Strategy 2013-18 has been reviewed and will require significant changes to be made to bring it in line with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA 2017), which was implemented in April 2018.

The HRA 2017 places many new duties on Local Authorities and has brought about the most significant changes in more than 40 years to how those who are homeless, or at risk of becoming so, are dealt with. Preventing homelessness and working together in partnership are central to Babergh and Mid Suffolk meeting their new Statutory duties.

We have ambitious plans for the development of the whole housing service, including Housing Solutions, which has responsibility for delivering the homelessness advice and prevention service.

We have a vision for our residents to live in districts where people have access to affordable and high-quality homes that enable them to build settled, safe and healthy lives, within sustainable and thriving communities.

We will need to consider the levels of activity required to achieve the aims set out in the strategy and ensure sufficient resources are made available to meet them.

This Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy will ensure it has a clear focus on how Babergh and Mid Suffolk can effectively prevent or relieve homelessness. It will also provide a plan on how to ensure that sufficient accommodation, support and advice is and will be made available for residents of the Districts who are at risk of becoming homeless or may already be homeless.

Our Vision - Where will be in 2024?

When we review the effectiveness of this Strategy in 2024, we want to have achieved the following: -

1. To have ended rough sleeping in our Districts
2. To have proactively worked with clients at an early stage, prior to the 56 days we have to statutorily
3. To have significantly reduced the usage of Bed and Breakfast
4. To have successfully prevented homelessness in the Private Rented Sector
5. Ensured that everyone contacting the service receives in depth advice and assistance on their housing rights and housing options

Strategic Context

This part of the Strategy explains the legal, national and local context behind the Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

The Legal Framework

This is the legal framework, which we must follow in order to meet our statutory obligations to those who are homeless or at risk of becoming so.

Housing Act 1996

The Housing Act 1996 (HA 1996) came into effect 20 January 1997. Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 is the overarching piece of legislation that relates to homelessness.

The Act has been amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, the Localism Act 2011 and more recently by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Homelessness Act 2002

The Homelessness Act 2002 introduced the following amendments to Part 7 of the HA1996:

- Changes to appeals against the suitability of accommodation
- Exclusion from eligibility for assistance of anyone refused housing benefit on eligibility (immigration) grounds
- Provisions relating to Allocations
- Right of Appeal against the refusal by the Local Authority to provide accommodation pending an appeal to the County Court on the homelessness decision
- Cooperation between a local housing authority and a social services authority
- Late appeals to the County Court

Localism Act 2011

The Localism Act 2011 amended Part 7 of the HA1996 with effect from 9 November 2012. It introduced powers for a Local Authority to end the main housing duty, owed to applicants where a homeless duty had been accepted, by arrangement of a suitable offer of accommodation through the private rented sector.

Welfare Reform Act 2012

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 (WRA 2012) came into effect 1 April 2013. Amongst the provisions of the WRA 2012 are the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) and Personal Independence Payments (PIP), the benefit cap, under-occupation reduction in entitlement and changes to the 'Social Fund' now known as Local Welfare Assistance (LWA).

The Care Act 2014

The Care Act 2014 prescribes that local authorities must promote wellbeing when carrying out their care and / or support functions when working with clients. One of the areas, which the Act details is the suitability of living accommodation, therefore, we should consider the suitability of living accommodation in line with this Act.

De-regulation Act 2015

The Deregulation Act 2015 came into effect 1 October 2015. It aims to prevent notices being issued in retaliation for complaints made about the condition of the property. It also introduced more stringent rules around the validity of notice, ensuring notices could only be served, if certain processes had been followed by the landlord at the beginning or during the tenancy.

Housing and Planning Act 2016

The Housing and Planning Act 2016 introduces a number of changes and new initiatives. These include measures to tackle rogue landlords within the private sector, extension of right to buy to include tenants of housing associations and the mandatory use of Fixed Term Tenancies, which we are currently awaiting more detail on when this will come into force.

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is the most significant change to legislation relating to homelessness in over 40 years. It has transformed the way homelessness services are expected to be delivered and introduced new duties.

The definition of homelessness has changed and extends the number of days someone is deemed to be threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56. It also prescribes that when a person receives a valid notice under section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 and it is due to expire within 56 days, then they should be treated as threatened with homelessness.

All Local Authorities are now required to provide or secure services to give people free information and advice on:

- Preventing homelessness
- Securing accommodation if homeless
- Housing Rights
- Help that is available to resolve their housing crisis and how to access that help

Services need to be designed to meet the needs of specific groups of people who are deemed to be more likely to become homeless. These groups include care leavers, victims of domestic abuse, people leaving the armed forces, people leaving prison or those who suffer with a mental illness or impairment.

There is a new duty to assess all applicants and agree a personal plan, which must be provided to the client in writing and outline the steps that they and the Authority will need to take to ensure accommodation is either retained or alternative accommodation secured.

There are two new duties, the 'prevention' duty for those threatened with homelessness and the 'relief' duty for those who are already homeless. For these duties, the applicant must be 'eligible' and either at risk of becoming homeless within 56 days, or already homeless.

There is no need to satisfy 'priority need' criteria and whether homelessness is threatened or occurred due to the client's own actions (intentionality) is not considered at this stage either.

Local authorities must take 'reasonable steps' to prevent or relieve homelessness and these must be written down in a personalised plan, which must be regularly reviewed and updated.

The duties can be discharged if accommodation is secured and has a reasonable prospect of being available for the next six months.

Applicants will be encouraged to follow the steps set out in their personalised plan as failure to do so could result in the Councils discharging their duties if it is deemed an applicant has 'deliberately and unreasonably refused' to work with them.

There is a new 'Duty to Refer', which came into effect 1st October 2018. This places new duties on a specified list of agencies to refer someone (with their permission) to a Local Council of their choice for advice if they are at risk of homelessness within 56 days.



[Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities 2018](#)

The Homelessness Code of Guidance 2018 (CoG 2018) was published in February 2018 in readiness for the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The CoG 2018 must be considered alongside the legislation when assessing and dealing with applications for assistance under either the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 or Part 7 of the HA 1996.

National Context

[Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England 2011](#)

The housing strategy sets out a package of reforms to:

- get the housing market moving again
- lay the foundations for a more responsive, effective and stable housing market in the future
- support choice and quality for tenants
- improve environmental standards and design quality

The new strategy will address concerns across the housing market making it easier to secure mortgages on new homes, improving fairness in social housing and ensuring homes that have been left empty for years are lived in once again.

Governments Pledge to End Rough Sleeping

In 2011, the No Second Night Out Approach was launched by the Government aimed at engaging with anyone sleeping rough after one night. It had six commitments, which included helping people off the streets, to access healthcare and obtain employment.

Despite many Local Authorities trying to adopt this model, figures obtained from Homeless Link show that 2,181 people were estimated to be sleeping rough in England in 2011 but that figure has risen significantly to 4,751 in 2017.

On 30th November 2017, Sajid Javid, the Housing Minister at the time announced a new Rough Sleepers Advisory Panel would be developed. The panel would work together to meet the Governments ambitious target of halving rough sleeping by 2022 and ending it completely by 2027.

The panel is made up of a number of representatives including the Local Government Association, Homeless Link, Shelter, St Basils, National Housing Federation, Crisis and the Mayors for London, Manchester and the West Midlands. There will also be a homelessness expert from Finland who has successfully developed and implemented a Housing First model.

The Government has already acted to tackle rough sleeping including: -

- £1 billion committed until 2020 to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping
- The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- £28 million committed to a Pilot of the Housing First model in the West Midlands, Manchester and Liverpool City.

Local Context

[Gateway to Homechoice Allocations Policy \(2018\)](#)

The Gateway to Homechoice is a housing register and choice based lettings system, which advertises available social housing properties located in Babergh, Braintree, Colchester, Ipswich, Maldon, Mid Suffolk, Suffolk Coastal and Waveney areas.

Applications are prioritised by Band and effective date in line with the Allocations Policy. Once an application is 'active', applicants are able to 'bid' for suitable vacancies.

Greater Haven Gateway Housing Strategy 2010-2015

The Greater Haven Gateway (GHG) Housing Strategy, which was published in 2010, incorporates the future plans for strategic housing across the Babergh, Braintree, Colchester, Ipswich, Maldon, Mid Suffolk, Suffolk Coastal and Tendring areas.

The vision of the GHG Housing Strategy is 'to build on the maturity of the GHG strategic housing partnership to work together on issues that benefit from a collaborative approach'

There are five main objectives of the strategy: -

1. Enable the development of high quality and sustainable affordable housing
2. Improve the condition and use of existing housing
3. Maximise customers housing choices and mobility
4. Provide enhanced housing options based on an understanding of links between health, wellbeing, training, employment and housing to help prevent homelessness and support vulnerable people
5. Increase the capacity and skills of the GHG partnership

Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)

This document covers the Ipswich and Waveney Housing Market Areas. The Ipswich Housing Market Area (IHMA) includes Babergh and Mid Suffolk districts along with Ipswich Borough Council and Suffolk Coastal District Council.

The document has been produced to assess and evidence housing mix, tenures and, general and affordable housing need.

Gypsy, Traveller, Travelling Show People and Boat Dwellers Accommodation Needs Assessment May 2017

This document assesses the accommodation needs of Gypsy, Traveller, Travelling Show People and Boat Dwellers. The areas cover the IHMA and Waveney and includes Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils. The document has been used to assess and evidence housing needs for these groups.

Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Suffolk 2013

The Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy was produced by the Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board.

The vision of the strategy is that people in Suffolk live healthier, happier lives. We also want to narrow the differences in healthy life expectancy between those living in our most deprived communities and those who are more affluent through achieving greater improvements in more disadvantaged communities.

There are four outcomes within the strategy:

- Every child in Suffolk has the best start in life,
- Suffolk residents have access to a healthy environment and take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing,
- Older people in Suffolk have a good quality of life and
- People in Suffolk have the opportunity to improve their mental health and wellbeing.

A refreshed version of the Strategy was published in 2016, which highlighted some of the key achievements so far and embedded four cross cutting themes across all outcomes:

- Stronger / Resilient Communities
- Embedding Prevention
- Addressing Inequalities
- Health and Care Integration.

Suffolk Sufficiency Strategy for Children in Care and Care Leavers 2018-2021

This document covers how Suffolk will improve life chances for those in care or leaving care.

We will support 'Priority 4 – Supporting 18+ Care Leavers' by working collaboratively to prevent homelessness for 18-25 year old Care Leavers.

What did we achieve in the 2013-2018 Homeless Strategy?

Continued to focus on reducing the number of households accommodated in Bed and Breakfast accommodation by regularly monitoring demand and as a result, have acquired an additional seven temporary accommodation units in each District. Mid Suffolk has recently acquired an additional seventeen units of temporary accommodation, which should significantly reduce the reliance on Bed and Breakfast accommodation.

Successfully prevented homelessness using the Government's *Mortgage Rescue Scheme* for 11 households in Babergh and 7 in Mid Suffolk. When the previous strategy was published, the Government was funding a *Mortgage Rescue Scheme*, to help those facing financial difficulty as a result of the economic downturn. The scheme aimed to prevent homelessness by a Social Landlord purchasing the property and then renting it back to the household. The scheme ended in 2014 when funding ceased.

Successfully prevented homelessness using the Councils Rent Deposit Scheme, which is used to try and assist clients in housing crisis access housing through the Private Rented Sector. Since 2013, Babergh has assisted 72 households and Mid Suffolk 32 to secure an Assured Shorthold Tenancy to prevent them from becoming homeless.

Babergh have brought over 140 and Mid Suffolk have brought over 150 empty homes back into use.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk have each built 27 new homes and have ambitious plans to build another 300 over the next three years.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk have used Right to Buy Receipts to acquire additional properties, which have been made available for affordable rent. Babergh have acquired 32 and Mid Suffolk 43.

Successful in a joint bid with West Suffolk Councils in 2016 to fund a rough sleeper prevention outreach and support worker to work across the areas covered by Babergh, Mid Suffolk and West Suffolk Councils.

Integrated our Financial Inclusion Service within the Housing Solutions Team and created capacity to enable the service to be rolled out to be 'tenure neutral' rather than purely focussing on our current tenants.

A business case was approved, and additional staff recruited to tackle the new duties set out within the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Successfully awarded funding in 2017 from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) domestic abuse accommodation fund. Funding of £516,244 has been granted to partners to provide accommodation for victims of domestic abuse across Suffolk

Babergh

Homeless Strategy Facts

Mid Suffolk



695

Homeless Applications Taken



405

Households Accepted as Homeless

Main Reasons for Homelessness:-



Loss of Private Rented Accommodation	164
Relatives can no longer accommodate	113
Fleeing Violence	42
Relationship Breakdown (non-violent)	44
Other	42



Reason for Priority Need:-

Dependent Children	231
Pregnancy	55
Mental Health	48
Physical Disability	26
Fleeing Violence	16
Other	29

0 Rough Sleeper recorded in 2018 'count'

1372 Cases where Homelessness has been prevented

428 Cases where Homelessness has been relieved

34 Temporary Accommodation Units at 1st January 2019

2013-2018



435

Homeless Applications Taken



275

Households Accepted as Homeless

Main Reasons for Homelessness:-



Loss of Private Rented Accommodation	104
Relatives can no longer accommodate	67
Fleeing Violence	35
Relationship Breakdown (non-violent)	29
Other	40



Reason for Priority Need:-

Dependent Children	193
Pregnancy	19
Mental Health	23
Physical Disability	17
Fleeing Violence	9
Other	14

0 Rough Sleeper recorded in 2018 'count'

704 Cases where Homelessness has been prevented

173 Cases where Homelessness has been relieved

32 Temporary Accommodation Units at 1st January 2019

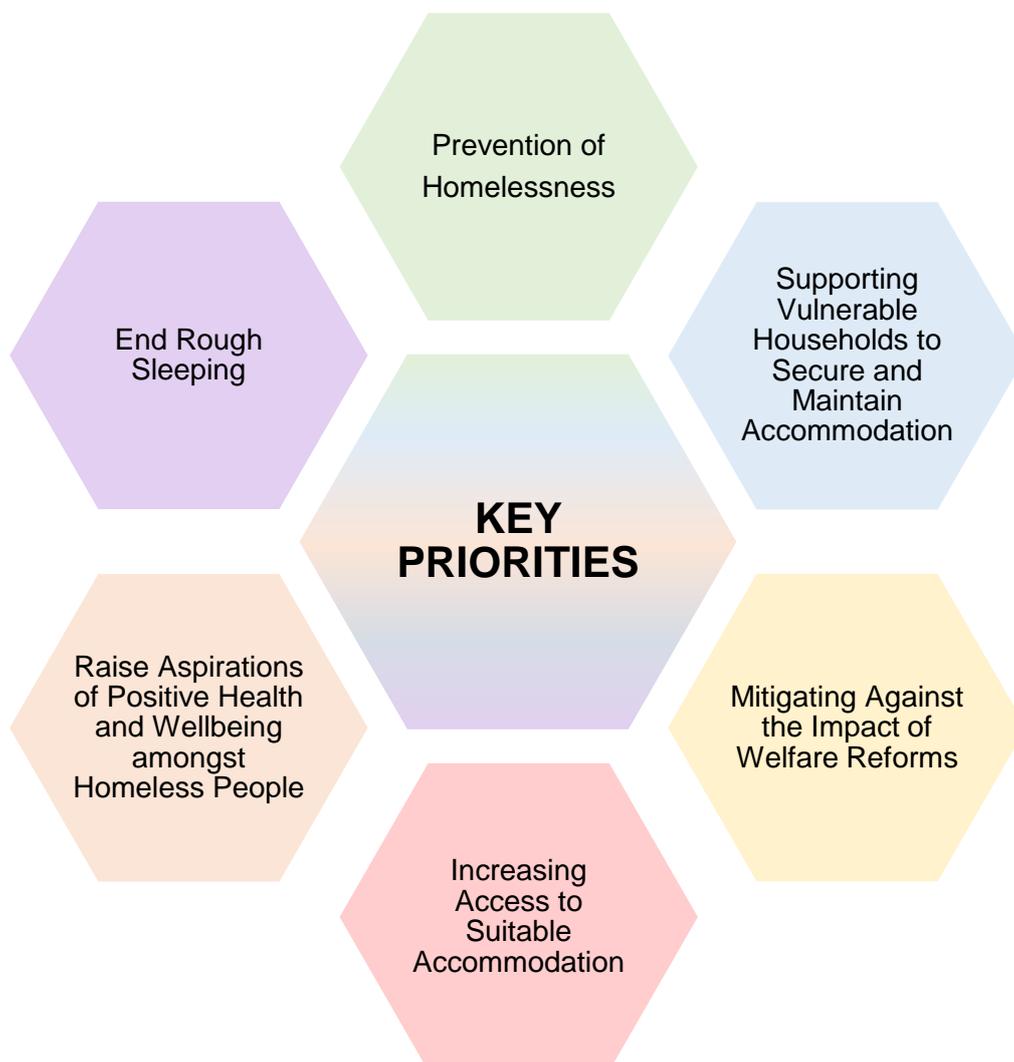
Key Priorities for the Strategy

Babergh and Mid Suffolk will focus on preventing and relieving homelessness by focussing on six key priorities over the next five years. This strategy will cover the period 2019-2024.

These priorities are based on the key priorities set by Elected Members for 2018-19, the Joint Strategic Plan 2016-2020 and new duties as prescribed in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which was enacted in April 2018.

For each priority shown below, there are a number of actions, which will shape our service to ensure we meet the needs of residents at risk of homelessness.

The Action Plan will be reviewed yearly to monitor progress made and celebrate achievements and as the landscape around us changes adjust our services to continue to be the most effective.



PRIORITY 1 - Prevention of Homelessness

Preventing and relieving homelessness underpins the work carried out by the Housing Solutions Service. We will continue to build on the successful preventions, which have taken place over the last five years. Prevention is and will continue to be better than cure. Not only does it provide a more positive outcome for those facing a housing crisis, but it is also more cost effective.

We are proud of the achievements made over the past five years and the successful number of cases where homelessness has been prevented or relieved. However, we cannot be complacent, we face a number of challenges when accessing prevention options due to demand, cost and availability.

Although we have delivered a prevention focussed service for several years, following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, prevention and relief work is now a statutory (legal) duty.

Homelessness cannot be solved alone, it is imperative that we work collaboratively with partners, both statutory and non-statutory across the Suffolk system.

We want to support people facing housing difficulties to access our services earlier. The Homelessness Reduction Act allows us to take an application at an earlier stage. Previously, someone could only apply for homelessness assistance when they were at risk of homelessness within 28 days, but under the new legislation, they can apply within 56 days. This additional time gives us more opportunities to prevent homelessness because the earlier we can intervene, the higher the chance of success.

The new Act requires action plans, known as *Personal Housing Plans* to be produced for every client accessing the housing solutions service. We will ensure these plans are realistic and meaningful. They will set out what actions we will take and what actions we expect the client to take. We will monitor and review these on a regular basis.

There are more people than ever trying to access services through the internet. We want to develop a comprehensive advice section on our website, including downloadable fact sheets on housing advice and options.

Prevention of Homelessness - Actions

- 1a** Ensure all clients who access the Housing Solutions Service are provided with accurate, comprehensive advice on the housing options available to them
- 1b** Develop a Homelessness Partnership to work across Suffolk to raise awareness of our service and to access our offer at an earlier stage
- 1c** Provide pathway plans for the most vulnerable client groups to help them access our services at an earlier stage
- 1d** Produce a comprehensive online advice service for clients to access housing options advice
- 1e** Ensure that all cases are accurately recorded to inform future strategies and prevention initiatives, so we can more effectively target our approach to tackling homelessness

PRIORITY 2 - Supporting Vulnerable Households to Secure and Maintain Accommodation

Those facing a housing crisis and approaching the Housing Solutions service are often the most vulnerable households within our Districts. We also support a number of marginalised adults who are excluded from society. It is imperative we continue to work with the most vulnerable to try and reduce the incidences of homelessness.

We will ensure the pathway plans, which were referred to in the *Prevention of Homelessness* priority, are targeted and focussed on the most vulnerable client groups.

We already have good working relationships with partners agencies, but we will continue to build on these and develop them further to ensure a joined up, holistic approach for all clients.

We also want to reduce the likelihood of those who have previously faced homelessness from facing it again. This is often known as the 'revolving door' of homelessness.

We want to develop and grow the service we provide to monitor the progress of those where homelessness has been successfully prevented or relieved, to try and identify risk factors at an early stage to prevent them from losing that accommodation and reduce the likelihood of a 'revolving door' issue.

Some of the most vulnerable and marginalised clients we work with are the hardest to find suitable accommodation for. We want to re-introduce a panel of partners who also work with these clients, along with supported housing providers to try and find suitable pathway plans follow in order to access appropriate accommodation.

Supporting Vulnerable Households to Secure and Maintain Accommodation - Actions

- 2a** Develop a process for offering short term support and then regular 'check ins' to monitor progress in accommodation and reduce the likelihood of repeated homelessness
- 2b** Adopt a comprehensive recording process for this action, so we can monitor and inform future projected case work and identify gaps in services, which can or may lead to someone being at repeated risk of homelessness
- 2c** Creation of a multi-agency panel to monitor and find solutions for the hardest to house client group
- 2d** Introduce tenancy training, initially to those in temporary accommodation or requesting assistance through the Rent Deposit Scheme to understand how to budget effectively, read meters, liaise with utility companies, benefits and council tax. It will also cover other useful information such as repairs, anti-social behaviour and who to contact if you are unable to pay your rent
- 2e** Ensure effective transitional support is provided to those moving on from supported housing projects and temporary accommodation to minimise the risk of repeated homelessness

PRIORITY 3 - Mitigating against the impact of Welfare Reforms

The introduction of the Welfare Reform Act has had a noticeable effect on a number of clients, and we want to continue to ensure we minimise any impact and reduce the risk of homelessness occurring.

We are already working closely with partners including the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB), but we want to continue to build upon the foundations we have. Working together, in partnership will ensure the most positive outcome for the client.

We have a small team of Tenancy Support Officers who were initially part of the Financial Inclusion Team, which focussed on financial advice and assistance for Babergh and Mid Suffolk tenants in rent arrears. This work was restructured into the Housing Solutions Team in August 2017 to reflect the synergies between the preventative role they undertake, and the preventative approach taken by the Solutions Team.

We have increased the capacity within the role from two posts to three. These roles are now tenure neutral meaning financial inclusion, budgeting advice, accessing discretionary funds and low-level tenancy support is offered to tenants of Councils, Registered Providers, Private Tenants and Mortgagee's.

The Tenancy Support Officers also provide Personal Budgeting Support (PBS) to those claiming Universal Credit in Babergh and Mid Suffolk through the Job Centres at Ipswich, Stowmarket and Sudbury.

We want to build good working relationships with private landlords and be able to offer advice and assistance to those accepting tenants in receipt of Universal Credit.

Mitigating against the impact of Welfare Reforms - Actions

- 3a** Continue to work closely and meet regularly with the DWP to tackle the impact of Welfare Reforms and the roll out of Universal Credit Full Service
- 3b** Develop working relationships with our in house Rents Team and Registered Provider's to minimise the risk of eviction due to Rent Arrears
- 3c** Ensure clients income is maximised and debts are addressed to reduce financial pressures and minimise the risk of homelessness occurring
- 3d** Build on relationships with CAB's to ensure a joined-up approach to tackling the most complex cases
- 3e** Development of a landlord's forum, where advice and assistance on Universal Credit, Grants for Home Improvements and Rights and Responsibilities as a Landlord can be given to private landlords and build better working relationships to increase our access to the Private Rented Sector

PRIORITY 4 - Increasing access to suitable accommodation

To successfully prevent homelessness, we need to increase the accommodation options available. Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils already try to source a number of accommodation options including supported housing, lodgings, private rented, temporary accommodation, shared housing and social housing.

Access to the private rented sector (PRS) has its challenges, which have increased in recent years. The challenges having a significant impact are the Local Housing Allowance 'Cap', which means the amount of Housing Benefit (HB) a client can apply for is restricted to a certain amount, which at present is significantly lower than rents charged across Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

The rollout of Universal Credit (UC) and the statistics released nationally show a significant increase in arrears figures, this often makes landlords more reluctant to accept a tenant who is reliant on UC to pay their rent.

The high house prices across Babergh and Mid Suffolk means that a lot of households are unable to access the housing market. Therefore, the private rented sector is in higher demand.

Therefore, we want to invest time in redeveloping the 'offer' we make to landlords to try and increase the number of successful preventions into the PRS.

We want to improve relationships with private landlords to offer our households more choice over property type and area they wish to live in. However, we need to balance this against what is affordable though.

We want to continue to work closely with the Housing Related Service at Suffolk County Council to ensure need and demand is considered when commissioning Housing Related Support services.

We want to ensure we continue to invest and maximise our housing options for those under 35, who are significantly impacted by the effect of the Welfare Reform Act changes.

Increasing access to suitable accommodation - Actions

- 4a** Review and redesign the 'Rent Deposit Scheme' to increase access to the Private Rented Sector
- 4b** Ensure a sufficient supply of suitable temporary accommodation to reduce the usage of Bed and Breakfast accommodation
- 4c** Ensure continued investment in accommodation options for under 35's, including lodgings schemes
- 4d** Ensure we continue to work with Suffolk County Council to provide them with need and demand data for Housing Related Support to inform their commissioning decisions
- 4e** Support the development of a short term Supported Housing Strategy

PRIORITY 5 - Raise aspirations of positive Health and Wellbeing amongst Homeless People

Homelessness is a complex issue and it is essential that we work closely with partners to improve health outcomes, reduce health inequalities and ensure we accurately inform commissioning decision that lead to better outcomes across the Suffolk system. Health and Wellbeing amongst homeless people is often low, especially single homeless and rough sleepers. The average age of death for a rough sleeper is 47 years old, compared to 77 years old of those who have no history of sleeping rough.

A report by the Local Government Association on *The Impact of Homelessness on Health* states that 57% of young homeless people are not in education, employment or training (NEET). They are also at higher risk of exploitation, criminal activity or becoming involved in gang culture. They also have high levels of self-reported mental health issues, self-harm and drug and alcohol abuse.

There has been 111% increase in older persons classed as homeless since 2009/10. Age UK estimates that 1.6M older households live in poverty. Living in poverty is likely to significantly affect their health and wellbeing.

We need to ensure all staff are trained effectively to ensure they recognise the linkages between health, wellbeing and homelessness.

Unless we ensure a holistic approach to tackling the causes to homelessness, we are unlikely to deliver a long term successful outcome.

Raise aspirations of positive Health and Wellbeing amongst Homeless People - Actions

- 5a** Ensure suitable pathway plans are developed and published in partnership with relevant bodies for the most vulnerable groups including those being discharged from hospital and those with mental health issues or learning disabilities
- 5b** Work with Public Health to provide data as required to ensure services such as Marginalised Adults continue to support the most vulnerable
- 5c** Ensure workforce development and awareness to the links between health, wellbeing and homelessness by providing adequate training on Mental Health, Drugs and Alcohol, Prevent, Gangs, County Lines, Making Every Contact Count and Domestic Abuse / Violence.
- 5d** Ensure everyone being accommodated in Temporary Accommodation has access to appropriate health services
- 5e** Ensure all temporary accommodation including Bed and Breakfast accommodation is regularly inspected to ensure they meet all required standards and ensure there is no detrimental impact on their health and wellbeing as a result of their placement in the accommodation.

PRIORITY 6 - End Rough Sleeping

The Government has pledged to half rough sleeping by 2022 and eliminate it altogether by 2027.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk take place in the yearly estimated rough sleeper count through the Homeless Link. The estimate is a 'snapshot' on one particular night and is estimated in partnership with other agencies working across the Districts.

The table below shows the number of rough sleepers recorded during the past five years.

Rough Sleeper Count - Estimated (November)					
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Babergh	0	2	7	1	0
Mid Suffolk	0	2	1	2	0

The numbers of people sleeping rough within the Districts is low, but still too many. No one should sleep rough and we need to ensure we have sufficient provision in place to promptly manage anyone sleeping rough.

We were successful in jointly bidding with West Suffolk Councils through the 'Trailblazer' programme in 2016 for a *Rough Sleeper Prevention and Support Worker*. This post is for two years and due to end in May 2019.

We will continue to work closely with partners, including drug and alcohol services, mental health and marginalised adult's services to provide a holistic, comprehensive, rounded service and actively engage at an early stage to minimise the risk of the rough sleeper becoming entrenched.

End Rough Sleeping – Actions

- 6a** Ensure we provide suitable provision for rough sleepers in extreme weather conditions under Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP)
- 6b** Ensure we access funding streams when available for additional support to tackle rough sleeping if there is a need
- 6c** Ensure contact is made with all rough sleepers within 24 hours of being notified of them
- 6d** Ensure that rough sleepers presenting from another area, where safe to do so are reconnected back to the area they originated from
- 6e** Work with partners and voluntary organisations to educate them on rough sleeping and the most positive, effective way to support and help the rough sleepers

For more information on the Strategy, please contact:

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