

## MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL

### Equality Impact Assessment

**Title of Policy/Service/Contract:** Homelessness Strategy for the period 2016-21

**Division:** Housing, Environmental Health and Building Control

**Lead Officer:** Julian Till

**Date Assessment completed:** June 2016

#### 1. SCOPING

##### **1.1 What are the aims of the policy, service/service change or contract?**

The strategy relates to the delivery of the Council's responsibilities regarding homelessness. These concern:

- Preventing homelessness through Housing Advice and Housing Options work
- Discharging the Council's functions and duties under the Homelessness legislation by assessing applications and arranging temporary accommodation where appropriate.
- Where temporary accommodation is appropriate, to arrange/secure accommodation at a reasonable cost and within Government targets.

The Strategy sets out 4 objectives in relation to the Housing Needs service for the period 2016-21 and identifies actions for their achievement. These objectives are to:

1. Prevent homelessness where possible.
2. Tackle homelessness amongst specific vulnerable groups.
3. Engage with landlords to maximise access to private rented sector accommodation.
4. Minimise the use of temporary accommodation where possible.

##### **1.2 Who does the service/policy/contract affect? Who are the main customers (internal or external)?**

People who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Those seeking housing advice and people in housing need. This affects in the main people on low to modest incomes. It will also disproportionately affect people who are vulnerable due to physical or mental disability, learning disabilities, those suffering domestic violence, young people, older people, ex-offenders and substance misusers.

Other vulnerable people requiring housing related support and/or accommodation.

Key partners involved in the delivery of the strategy include housing associations, private landlords and lettings agents. Other external stakeholders include West Sussex County Council, Sussex Police, the Probation Service, Affinity Sutton, Family Mosaic, Southdown Housing, Citizens Advice Bureaux and WORTH Services.

Internal partners within the Council include the Revenues and Benefits Service and the Housing Standards Team.

##### **1.3 What equality information is available, including any evidence from engagement and analysis of use of services?**

A review of homelessness in Mid Sussex has been completed with detailed information regarding the composition of the client groups dealt with by the Housing Needs service. This includes breakdowns of the ethnicity of those approaching the Housing Needs Team for advice and the priority need category of those accepted as homeless.

Information is provided from West Sussex County Council on young people in the District assisted by the Youth Homelessness Prevention Team and Leaving Care Service.

The review includes an assessment of the affordability of rented accommodation in the social and private sector.

**1.4 What does this information tell us about the equality issues associated with the service and implications for the protected groups?**

Monitoring of those approaching the Council for housing advice by ethnicity does not show any marked differences with that of the general population.

The service deals with a high proportion of vulnerable people, especially due to old age, physical disability and mental illness. 36% of households without children who were accepted as homeless contained a vulnerable person. A lack of access to affordable accommodation is a major factor for people on low incomes and supported by benefits.

**1.5 Are contractors or partnerships used to deliver the service? Y**

If No go to section 2.

If yes, please refer to the guidance notes, particularly Appendix One of the MSDC Guidance "Integrating Equality and Diversity into Procurement", and complete the next three questions.

**Identify the contractors/partnerships used to deliver the service.**

There are a number of services that the Housing Needs Team works with to prevent homelessness which are procured through West Sussex County Council or countywide partnerships. Affinity Sutton provides access to temporary accommodation and manages the Common Housing Register on behalf of the Council through a Service Level Agreement. Other temporary accommodation is provided by Sussex Oakleaf HA and where necessary procured on a nightly basis from privately run guest house and bed and breakfast establishments.

**What is their contribution to equality in service delivery and the promotion of equality?**

Partner organisations support the activities of the Housing Needs Team in preventing homelessness amongst often vulnerable people and through supporting people who need temporary accommodation. Affinity Sutton's Homemove Team ensures that social housing is allocated in accordance with the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme. The scheme is designed to ensure allocations are based on housing need and that all applicants are treated fairly and in a transparent way.

**How are equality issues addressed through contractual arrangements and service level agreements?**

The SLA with Affinity Sutton sets out equal opportunities expectations and requires the contractor to monitor its work and the outcomes, e.g. who gets housed.

## 2. Assessment of Impact; Analysis and Action Planning

Any gaps in information or provision, opportunities to promote equalities and good relations identified above need to be translated into SMART actions and recorded here. These actions need to be delivered and monitored through the service planning process.

Opportunity to promote equality, good relations and/or address barriers to service/differential impact	Current action taken to address these	Further actions required and timescales	Lead Officer	How will impact be measured
<p>The needs of different ethnic groups including white minorities, but also established white communities</p> <p>BME groups may be disadvantaged in terms of accessing housing services.</p>	<p>Analysis is undertaken of the ethnicity of those seeking housing advice in comparison with Census information on the makeup (see the review of Homelessness). Also of the Housing Register and lettings.</p>	<p>None identified.</p>	<p>Julian Till</p>	
<p>The needs of men and women. Including taking account of pregnancy and maternity.</p> <p>Homelessness may be caused by women and men suffering domestic abuse.</p>	<p>Households subject to domestic abuse are referred to the relevant support service, such as WORTH, which provides immediate support for high risk cases and the Stonham Outreach Service which supplies long-term floating support. We also input to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) which consider how individual domestic violence cases can be best managed.</p>	<p>None identified.</p>	<p>Julian Till</p>	
<p>The needs of disabled people</p> <p>The availability of wheelchair accessible temporary accommodation for those who need it.</p> <p>There is a high incidence of mental health needs amongst those approaching the Council who are threatened with homelessness.</p>	<p>Wheelchair accessible hotel temporary accommodation is procured when necessary from national hotel providers such as Premier Inn.</p> <p>The Housing Needs Team works with mental health services and the Community Mental Health Teams and with WSCC's Housing Co-Ordinator through the multi-agency Mental Health and Housing Liaison Group.</p>	<p>None identified.</p>	<p>Julian Till</p>	

Opportunity to promote equality and/or barriers to service/differential impact	Current action taken to address these	Further actions required and timescales	Lead Officer	How will impact be measured
The needs of people with a religion or belief	None identified.			
The needs of gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and heterosexual people	Designated temporary housing is provided in the District by Sussex Oakleaf HA, who provides an intensive housing management service for vulnerable single people who may have mental health issues.	None identified.		
Issues from marriage and civil partnership	None identified.	None identified.		
The needs of different age groups, for example older and younger people	Same sex partnerships are considered the same as heterosexual ones in assessing housing need.	None identified.		
Prevention of homelessness amongst young people who are especially vulnerable to becoming homeless and sometimes reluctant to come to the Council's offices.  Young and single people are more likely to be rough sleepers.	Countywide WSCC Youth Homelessness Prevention Service in place for homeless 16/17 year olds, including mediation, emergency accommodation and long term housing support. Joint Working Protocol for dealing with Care Leavers is in place between WSCC and District and Borough Councils. Rough sleepers are assisted through the East & West Sussex SHORE project.	Regular monitoring of the Youth Homelessness Prevention Service in partnership with other West Sussex councils.  Annual rough sleeper estimate undertaken through contact with partner groups.	Julian Till	Number of 16/17 year olds in Mid Sussex prevented from becoming homeless.

Opportunity to promote equality and/or barriers to service/differential impact	Current action taken to address these	Further actions required and timescales	Lead Officer	How will impact be measured
The needs of transgender communities None identified.				
The needs of people who are disadvantaged by socio-economic factors such as low incomes, skill or living in a deprived area Homelessness applications and requests for housing advice are most common from people on low incomes. There is a lack of access to affordable social housing and affordable private rented properties in the District.	Working with the Benefits Section to ensure access to Discretionary Housing Payments, including those who have been affected by welfare reforms such as the Benefit Cap. The Housing Needs Team signposts to the crisis support available from the WSCC Local Assistance Network and provides Food Bank tokens. Assistance through the Council's rent in advance and deposit guarantee scheme is provided to assist people to access the private rented sector. The Council also employs a Private Sector Tenancy Negotiator, to engage with private sector landlords who may be willing to offer tenancies to clients of the Housing Needs Team.	Further action to attract private sector landlords who may be willing to accept clients of the Housing Needs Team.	Julian Till	Increased numbers assisted to access the private rented sector.
The needs of people who live in a rural area Those in rural areas may have difficulty in accessing the Oaklands office at Haywards Heath.	The Housing Needs Team attends regular Help-Points sessions at Burgess Hill and East Grinstead. The team also carry out home visits when appropriate. Appropriate and useful advice is made available on the Housing pages of the Council's website to provide housing advice services.	None identified.	Julian Till	

### 3. Mid Sussex District Council Equality Impact Assessment Summary

Key Findings	Future Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Housing Needs Team deals with a range of often vulnerable people requiring housing advice. 36% of households without children who were accepted as homeless last year contained a vulnerable person.</li> <li>Monitoring by ethnicity of those using the service does not suggest that the make-up of applicants is different from the background population.</li> <li>Households facing homelessness due to domestic abuse are referred to support services such as WORTH and the Stonham Outreach Service when they are assisted by the Housing Needs Team.</li> <li>There is a high incidence of mental health needs amongst those approaching the Council who are threatened with homelessness. The support provided includes working with mental health services and the Community Mental Health Teams.</li> <li>Young people facing homelessness are being effectively supported by the WSCC Youth Homelessness Prevention Service.</li> <li>There is a general lack of access to rented accommodation in both the social and private rented sectors for people on low incomes/benefits. This is being exacerbated by a Government freeze of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) until 2020 making most private rented accommodation unaffordable to those who rely on benefit for part or all of their rent. In addition private sector landlords are increasingly unwilling to accept tenants in receipt of benefit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual monitoring of the ethnicity of those approaching the Council for housing advice and being accepted as homeless.</li> <li>Further measures to identify landlords in the private rented sector to accept those in housing need.</li> </ul> <p>Also, see the Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021 Action Plan.</p>

### 4. Signing off this assessment and action plan

Signature .....  
 Julian Till, Housing Needs Manager  
 Person undertaking the assessment  
 Date ...30<sup>th</sup> June 2016.....

Signature .....  
 Tom Clark, Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer.  
 Acting Head of Service  
 Date ... 30<sup>th</sup> June 2016.....