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Foreword

Councillor Sarah Creedy
Lead Councillor for Housing and Social Care

Having a home is a basic need for everyone - it offers safety and security and a place where they can find peace of mind. But sadly not everyone is so fortunate. During this period of austerity, it is crucial that homelessness prevention remains high on everyone’s agenda, and that we target resources to meet the challenges presented by the economic downturn and welfare reform.

Since the previous strategy was published in 2007, we have been successful in preventing homelessness. However the picture is changing and it will be difficult for us to sustain similar levels of success in the future.

Our new strategy aims to prevent homelessness and support our vision that ‘everyone should have a home that meets their needs’. This is ambitious but we believe that we can continue to offer people realistic housing options and choices if they seek our help at an early stage.

Throughout this strategy, we use case studies to give examples of the work we and our partners do which show that homelessness can be prevented successfully with the right help and support at the right time.

I would like to thank all the clients, customers and partners who took part in the consultation for this strategy and shared their insights into how we can make a difference in the borough.

This is a five-year strategy. However, we will review and update the action plan annually, to reflect the rapid pace of change in the economy and in housing policy.
Introduction

Why we need a Homelessness Strategy?
The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on housing authorities to carry out a review of homelessness in their area and produce a strategy at least every five years to prevent homelessness. Our last strategy covered the period 2007-2012 and provided the framework and direction for the delivery of our homelessness services. This strategy has now reached its conclusion. We now need to consider the future bearing in mind that much has changed in the intervening years, predominantly due to the recession and changes to the welfare system.

We have developed this strategy in consultation with our service users and other stakeholders. It will run from 2013-2018 and the accompanying action plan will be a working document. Many of the actions identified in the previous strategy are still relevant because some of the problems concerning homelessness and its causes remain the same. The problems may worsen as welfare changes take effect alongside a continuing reduction in the availability of affordable rental accommodation.

We will monitor, review and update the strategy annually, and it will underpin the agenda for future homelessness forums.

The Homelessness Strategy complements and feeds into the Housing Strategy Interim Statement produced in 2011, which centred on the following themes:

- Improving supply
- Improving existing housing
- Social and economic well-being

The Homelessness Strategy will not address in detail issues of supply and delivery of new housing, which the Housing Strategy covers.

The impact of homelessness is significant for those who experience it, and is costly to the public purse. The Government’s analysis estimates the annual cost of homelessness to range from £24,000 - £30,000 (gross) per person, up to circa £1bn (gross) annually. The Government's priorities were set out in the report of the cross-ministerial working group on homelessness: Making Every Contact Count: A Joint Approach to Preventing Homelessness, published by Department of Communities Local Government (DCLG) in August 2012. This sets out how local strategies can contribute to the achievement of a gold standard housing options service by achieving ten local challenges.

We aim to meet the Government’s priorities and challenges through this strategy and have identified three core areas as our focus for the next five years.

- Managing the impact of welfare reforms.
  We are facing a period of significant reform in the delivery of welfare benefits. These changes are already affecting our customers and will continue to do so, increasing the risk of homelessness. We need to understand the impact of the changes locally and work with partners to manage and mitigate any detrimental impact where possible.

---

• **Sustaining and creating access to accommodation.**
  Enabling people to find and sustain suitable accommodation in the long term is key to preventing homelessness. This is becoming increasingly challenging as existing and new social housing supply remains limited, rents in social housing are rising, and private rented homes are more difficult to access and afford by those on benefits.

• **Tackling rough sleeping and single homelessness.**
  Single people account for over half the households on our housing register but are generally considered a lower priority than families or other households. We are witnessing an increase in homelessness amongst single people, and in particular rough sleeping, reflecting the national trend.

Alongside every one of these objectives is the commitment to work in partnership across services and agencies, to address the issues and ensure that an effective communications strategy underpins our approach. We will also seek to continuously improve our service delivery, promote the housing options and solutions approach whilst empowering people to try to resolve their own housing issues.

This strategy is in two parts. The first part focuses on the review of homelessness and housing need together, and our approach to prevention, both directly and in partnership with others.

The second part considers the core areas and our action plans.
1. Housing need and homelessness

Guildford is an affluent borough, where unemployment is relatively low. However, high house prices and a shortage of affordable housing make the area unaffordable for many people. This section highlights the key areas of housing need and associated trends.

Guildford’s population has increased by 7,400 since the 2001 Census, to around 137,200 in 2011; it comprises 54,500 households.

The following chart shows the tenure of households in the borough.

![Tenure in the borough, 2011 Census](chart)

Over the past decade, the proportion of privately owned homes has decreased from 75 per cent to 69 per cent, and the proportion of households renting privately has increased from 9 per cent to 16 per cent. This is in line with the trend seen across the country, as house prices have increased relative to earnings and mortgages have become harder to obtain.

Despite some falls in house prices due to the recession, they remain at more than ten times average annual earnings, therefore the housing market remains accessible only to households with either large existing equity or very high incomes.

Although the majority of households in Guildford live in owner-occupied accommodation it is clear that the high cost of entry to owner-occupation has led to households that may previously have purchased a home having to consider alternative solutions to their housing need. This is especially true of people on low to moderate incomes or single income households.
House Prices

Average cost of properties sold in Guildford between March 2009 and December 2012.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month/year</th>
<th>Detached ave price £</th>
<th>Terraced ave Price £</th>
<th>Flat/ maisonette ave Price £</th>
<th>Overall ave price £</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 2009</td>
<td>538,953</td>
<td>226,639</td>
<td>185,201</td>
<td>327,987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2010</td>
<td>573,006</td>
<td>278,503</td>
<td>201,585</td>
<td>357,779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2011</td>
<td>636,322</td>
<td>267,975</td>
<td>213,775</td>
<td>390,562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2012</td>
<td>678,097</td>
<td>252,877</td>
<td>238,445</td>
<td>373,538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2012</td>
<td>679,093</td>
<td>294,200</td>
<td>235,904</td>
<td>423,891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2012</td>
<td>638,413</td>
<td>318,806</td>
<td>215,682</td>
<td>394,874</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Land registry quarterly monitoring report December 2012 via BBC in-depth)

Rents in the borough have increased by approximately £50 per month over the past two years. A one-bedroom flat for private rental now costs around £750 per month and a two-bedroom property in excess of £950. Three-bedroom properties are available from £1300 per month.

Rents in Guildford are significantly higher than in other areas. The following table illustrates the comparisons over the period April 2011 to December 2012.
Housing Demand

There are currently 3700 households registered on Guildford’s housing needs register. This represents an increase of 50 per cent over the past decade. However since the start of the previous homelessness strategy the numbers have remained roughly the same.

83 per cent of the households on the register are applying for housing from other types of accommodation and 17 per cent are already housed by the Council or its partner Registered Providers of Affordable Housing (RPs) but are seeking a property move.

Of the households on the register, by far the largest group seeking assistance with housing is single people under 60 years of age. At the end of March 2013 there were 1544 single people in this age group seeking housing (including tenants looking to transfer). This is an increase of almost 52 per cent since 2003-4.

Housing supply

The table below compares the last four years supply of social housing. This shows that supply of accommodation dipped in 2010-11 and 2011-12, with a particular drop in Council homes in 2011-12. This recovered to some degree last year but is still lower than expected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Council stock</th>
<th>Housing Association</th>
<th>Shared Ownership</th>
<th>Homes 4U</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008/9</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>+3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>+3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>-11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>-14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>+3.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table below sets out the total number of households we housed during 2012-13 by tenure and size of property.
Even excluding households within the lower priority bands on the housing register\(^2\), there remains a significant gap between the number of applicants joining the housing register and the social housing available each year to meet this demand. Below is a comparison of applicants to combined Council and housing association supply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Council stock</th>
<th>Housing Association</th>
<th>Shared Ownership</th>
<th>Homes 4U</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 bedroom</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 bedroom</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+ bedroom</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>274</strong></td>
<td><strong>85</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>102</strong></td>
<td><strong>484</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even excluding households within the lower priority bands on the housing register\(^2\), there remains a significant gap between the number of applicants joining the housing register and the social housing available each year to meet this demand. Below is a comparison of applicants to combined Council and housing association supply.

Given the pressure on supply of most housing, applicants can wait over three years and sometimes longer for social rented housing. Applicants in bands A and B are normally housed much more quickly and this can vary from a few weeks to more than a year subject to the type of property needed and the vacancies that become available. Long waiting times put pressures on families and can contribute to increases in homelessness.

**Reduction in available social housing**

The number of vacancies becoming available each year has been decreasing for some time. It is not entirely clear what has caused this, but reasons are likely to include:

- fewer new properties being built
- more properties being sold under the Right to Buy scheme
- people living longer

\(^2\) The Housing Allocation Scheme prioritises all applicants into five Bands from A-E, those in band D and E have a low priority.
• older people remaining in their homes for longer, thanks to funding being channelled into adaptations and support provided in the home
• the increasing cost of renting in the private sector or buying a home leading to fewer people being either willing or able to move out of social housing.

Provision of new homes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total new homes</th>
<th>New affordable homes</th>
<th>Affordable homes as a % of all new homes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008/9</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total over last 5 years</strong></td>
<td><strong>1306</strong></td>
<td><strong>322</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the table above, ‘Total new homes’ includes all new homes, both private and affordable (gross figure including replacement housing). ‘New affordable homes’ is housing (for rent or part-rent/part-buy) provided at below market rates for people who cannot meet their housing needs on the open market.

In recent years, government funding for affordable housing has reduced. However we continue to work with the Homes and Communities Agency and housing association partners to attract grant funding to the borough, and to provide new homes for rent and shared ownership.

We are also preparing a pipeline of future developments, including some affordable housing to be built and managed directly by the Council, to try to meet the gap in provision of new housing.

**Statutory Homelessness**

Over the last decade, the picture of homelessness in the borough has changed completely. In 2001-02, we took 465 homeless applications, accepted a duty to assist in 148 cases and placed 180 households in temporary accommodation.

From early 2004-05, we changed the way we provided services following the implementation of the first homelessness strategy. This resulted in a dramatic reduction in statutory homeless applications. Although numbers remain relatively low, there was a spike in application in 2011-12 when 58 households applied to the Council as homeless, a 61 per cent increase compared to the previous year. However, fewer made applications last year.

Similarly, there has been a big reduction in the overall number of homeless households where a full housing duty was accepted. However, there has been a higher number in the last three years.
Use of Temporary Accommodation

Where we accept a full housing duty, households are housed temporarily until we can offer long-term housing. Normally this is in specially allocated accommodation provided by housing associations, but in some instances, we also have to use our own stock.

The numbers in temporary accommodation tripled in the last year and are at the highest level since 2006. Families can be in temporary accommodation for well in excess of two years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>March 2009</th>
<th>March 2010</th>
<th>March 2011</th>
<th>March 2012</th>
<th>March 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Numbers in temporary accommodation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use of Bed and Breakfast Accommodation

In 2012-13, we spent £47,732 on emergency accommodation. This has increased from £35,869 in 2011-12. Of those placed in emergency accommodation in 2012-13 almost half were on the day presentations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2010-11</th>
<th>2011-12</th>
<th>2012-13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of placements</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average cost per night</td>
<td>£38.66</td>
<td>£47.73</td>
<td>£47.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average no. of nights</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average cost per week</td>
<td>£270.62</td>
<td>£334.11</td>
<td>£331.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although there were fewer placements, the average length of stay was longer than in previous years reflecting the increasing difficulty in finding other accommodation for them particularly families. We only placed one young person in B&B in 2012-13 where they stayed for just over six weeks as we were unable to secure suitable move-on accommodation for them.

### Housing Options and Homelessness Prevention Casework

Guildford’s proactive housing options approach, with a focus on casework and support to those in need, continues to be effective.

In 2012-13, we helped prevent 466 households from becoming homeless for at least six months, a reduction of 21 per cent from 2011-12. Although our success has been more limited than in previous years, it remains a positive outcome given the economic situation and cost of rents in the private sector.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Housing Options cases</th>
<th>Homelessness prevented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007/08</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008/09</td>
<td>773</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>677</td>
<td>592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>614</td>
<td>466</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table below presents a profile of all the open cases of the Housing Options team in April 2013.

The main reasons for homelessness follow national trends. Principally, it is due to the loss of private rented accommodation, relationship breakdown, or eviction by family or friends. These may fluctuate but consistently remain the primary causes of homelessness.

Our Housing Options team also provides a wide range of advice about housing issues, our housing policies and other relevant matters.

The table below shows the main reason for intervention by Housing Options officers when taking on cases.
**Reason for Housing Options intervention**

The table below shows the number and percentage of the caseload for the three main causes of homelessness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Loss of AST cases</th>
<th>% of loss of AST cases</th>
<th>Relationship breakdown cases</th>
<th>% of relationship breakdown cases</th>
<th>Family or friend evictions</th>
<th>% of family friends eviction cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008/09</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A significant proportion of households needing a housing options interview have lost an assured shorthold tenancy. The reasons for this are often outside the control of the households approaching us for help. Sometimes properties are taken off the rental market and sold. Some evictions arise due to breach of tenancy conditions but if we can intervene and negotiate with the landlord, we may stop the tenancy from ending.

Cases involving a relationship breakdown include both those involving domestic abuse and those that do not. We saw fewer cases involving relationship breakdown in 2012-13 but this does fluctuate. The proportion of cases involving abuse is normally higher than non-abusive breakdowns.
Casework involving evictions by family and friends increased to 19 per cent in 2012-13.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total clients (numbers)</th>
<th>Singles (numbers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16 &amp; 17</td>
<td>18 to 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008/09</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Younger people and people under 21 years old form a significant proportion of our cases. A quarter was in this age group in 2012-13, including those aged 16 and 17, although the number of those aged under 18 has reduced.

**Use of the Private Rented Sector: Homes 4U Rent Deposit Scheme**

Homes 4U is a service provided by the Council to assist applicants to access private rented housing, and includes the provision of rent deposit bonds, and in certain cases a loan to cover rent in advance.

The Homes 4U Scheme remains one of the main sources of help for households facing homelessness. It is normally used to help households the Council would otherwise have a statutory duty to secure a home for.

During 2012-13, we assisted 102 households via Homes 4U. This represents almost 30 per cent of the households we assisted with housing. The outcome is better than originally predicted.

We have sustained access to the private rented sector thanks to successful marketing by the private rented sector team through the Homes 4U scheme. Members of the team have built relationships in the private sector and offer support to landlords and tenants.
Looking at trends, there appears to be some improvement in the availability of three-bedroom family properties to rent. The reason for this is unknown but it may be due to new provision of student housing on the university campus, combined with a drop in the number of students studying in Guildford.

In addition, welfare reform has meant that some families are unable to afford three-bedroom properties, so seek two-bedroom houses. However, this has increased pressure on two-bedroom properties generally.

**Rough Sleeping**

The graph below shows the numbers of individuals sleeping rough each year in the borough.

![Number of rough sleepers per year](image)

The Homeless Outreach and Support Team (HOST) collate the rough sleeping figures. All those included are known by name and have had their circumstances verified as far as is feasible.

There has been a reduction in the number of individuals that were sleeping rough in Guildford in 2012-13 but an increase in the average number of people sleeping out on any one night. In 2012-13, HOST made contact with 381 individuals who were homeless or at risk of homelessness, of which 75 slept rough during this period. Although the numbers of those sleeping rough fell, there was a 12 per cent increase in the number of HOST service users in 2012-13. We believe it is too early to indicate if we are likely to sustain this reduction.

Those clients not rough sleeping were in insecure accommodation such as night shelters or sofa surfing. As such, many of these clients were at risk of rough sleeping.

The number of rough sleepers at any one time fluctuates considerably as can be seen in the monthly snapshot table below.
The average number of rough sleepers was 5.25 per night in 2011-12 but rose to 7.92 in 2012-13. This figure comes from a monthly census that records those individuals rough sleeping on the last day of every month.

The number of people under the age of 45 sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough has increased over the past three years. 2012-13 shows an increase in the number of service users aged 18-24. At 27 per cent, this is the largest age group amongst HOST’s clients.

In 2011-12, the gender split was 16.3 per cent female and 83.7 per cent male. 2012-13 saw a drop in female clients to 11.3 per cent and 88.7 percent male clients.

In 2008-09, we began monitoring rough sleepers to determine the area’s ‘street flow’ profile. Street flow defines service users by how long they have been a rough sleeper:
• short stay service users - may be new to the street or sleep rough for a short period before finding accommodation
• repeat or revolving door service users - generally have a pattern of engagement with services for periods followed by periods of rough sleeping or homelessness before they re-engage with services
• long stay service users - have a long history of rough sleeping, usually three or more years. They are less likely to engage with services.

This monitoring allows agencies working to prevent and resolve rough sleeping in Guildford to target their services more effectively.

The street flow trends show that the number of individuals sleeping rough for the first time increased significantly in 2010-11. At the same time, the revolving door cases reduced by over half from the previous year. The 2012-13 figures show a significant decrease in the overall numbers rough sleeping. The number of entrenched rough sleepers has remained constant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2010/11</th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short stay</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revolving door</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long stay</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2012-13 has seen a change in the profile of service users’ needs with nearly 22 per cent of all service users having homelessness as their primary issue. Drug misuse at 18 per cent, alcohol misuse at 17 per cent and ex-offenders at just over 17 per cent, shows that there are a continued high incidence of rough sleepers presenting with complex support needs.
The graph below shows the area of local connection of all the 381 service users in contact with HOST during 2012-13.
We use the definition of local connection used by the DCLG in their guidance on homelessness\(^3\). This is “residence for at least six months in the area during the previous 12 months or for not less than three years during the previous five-year period”.

We record local connection as at the service user’s first point of contact with HOST. If they are from outside the area and are assisted with hostel accommodation for six months but then become street homeless again they will be considered to have a local connection from there on whilst they remain in the borough. This will not give them any priority on the housing register until they have been in the area for at least three years\(^4\).

Many rough sleepers come to Guildford to access services. Over the past two years, less than half of HOST clients had a local connection with the borough. In 2012-13, 46 per cent had a local connection and a further 30 per cent had a connection elsewhere in Surrey.

There was an increase in people from overseas among HOST’s clients. The following table illustrates their immigration status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immigration status</th>
<th>Number of clients</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British Citizen</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>92.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No recourse to public funds</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited leave to remain(^5)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlimited leave to remain</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>381</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Historically, Eastern Europeans have been a very small proportion of those rough sleeping in Guildford. The figure remained reasonably consistent at around four people per annum for a number of years (the same clients), until 2011-12 when this increased to eight clients. 2012-13 has seen a significant increase to 22 clients, which represents just under six per cent of all HOST contacts. This increase reflects the national trend. Fifty per cent of these individuals have no recourse to public funds and so are very difficult to assist. However HOST are able to assist some people by securing benefits for them so they can access hostel accommodation.

**Future demand for housing**

The demand for housing in Guildford is likely to increase over the next five years. Guildford has the highest level of immigration from EU nationals and the accession states of all the Surrey authorities, with Polish migrants forming the largest group. Whilst not a huge factor in housing need, there is an identified demand for social housing from some of these workers as many are in low paid employment. It is not clear what impact this will have on

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4 Under the housing allocations scheme, applicants placed in Band C or above must normally have a long and substantive residential connection with the borough of at least three years.
5 Leave to remain is permission to either stay in the UK, temporarily (‘limited leave to remain’) or permanently (‘indefinite leave to remain’).
the borough in the future, particularly as the Government is currently reviewing the eligibility of foreign nationals for social housing.

Restrictions on workers from Romania and Bulgaria entering the EU will cease at the end of 2013, and there may be a further influx of workers from outside the UK. Again, it is difficult to quantify what effect this will have in the borough. However if workers do arrive it is likely that a significant proportion will be in low paid work, which will add further pressure to demand for social housing or for the more affordable end of the private rented sector.

The chart below shows the number of overseas nationals who registered for National Insurance numbers over the past decade. Guildford has the highest number of registrations of any Surrey local authority, and has significantly over the average. The spike in registrations between 2005 and 2009 is a result of Poland joining the European Union, however this influx has diminished, in part due to the recession.

We must be careful of drawing too many conclusions from the following chart regarding homelessness services, as the figures in the chart include both EU and non-EU immigrants, and anecdotal evidence suggests that many of these are from wealthy households who are unlikely to become homeless.

The table below shows Guildford rates for National Insurance number registrations.6

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) for West Surrey7 identified a significant need for new affordable homes per annum in order to meet the current backlog, plus newly arising need, over five years.

A housing needs survey has recently been carried out to update the SHMA, and the results will be published shortly. The initial results indicate that the level of housing need still far exceeds the amount of new housing that we are able to provide, given the shortage of available land in the borough combined with financial constraints.

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7 Published in 2009 http://www.guildford.gov.uk/shma
### Summary of key trends

| **House prices** | House prices have increased. In relation to incomes, they reached a peak in 2007, when homes priced in the lowest 25 per cent of those for sale were 11 times the salaries of households on the lowest incomes. This has since improved marginally to being 10 times salary; the same level as in 2005. |
| **Availability of affordable housing** | This has continued to decrease with fewer vacancies in the social rented stock. In part, this may be attributed to the sale of homes under the Right to Buy scheme, and fewer tenants seeking to move out of social rented homes, including older people staying in their homes rather than moving into residential or nursing homes. There are also fewer affordable homes being built. |
| **Housing need** | Remains at a high level – currently 3700 households on the housing register. The number has been at a similar level for the last five years. Social rented housing supply is also lower than it was five years ago, which means long waiting times for most housing applicants and puts additional pressure on those in difficult housing circumstances. |
| **Homelessness applications** | The number of homelessness applications has increased to over 50 in the last three years although the number we accept is relatively low. We have continued to be successful in finding alternative housing solutions for many households at risk of homelessness. |
| **Use of emergency and temporary accommodation** | The number of households in temporary accommodation is increasing. Although the numbers placed in emergency bed and breakfast accommodation is relatively low, it is taking longer to move them to more suitable housing. |
| **Rough sleeping** | Although numbers sleeping rough have fallen in the last year, the average number of people sleeping rough each night has increased. There is also an increase in those at risk of sleeping rough. |
2. Preventing homelessness

This chapter outlines how we currently deliver services, identifying key partnerships and projects that make a difference. It includes some of the feedback from consultation with stakeholders and people that are homeless or experienced homelessness.

Housing Options

We have achieved a lot over the life of the last homelessness strategy 2007-2012. The main drive towards a proactive homelessness prevention approach has resulted in a responsive service, which prevents homelessness from occurring rather than just dealing with the aftermath.

We use a ‘housing options’ approach which, rather than dealing with homelessness as it arises, follows a four stage plan:

- increasing awareness and information about housing and the risk of homelessness
- providing general or specific housing advice for those with housing needs to prevent homelessness
- offering a range of housing options, direct support and intervention for those facing homelessness
- providing a safety net for those who do become homeless

The approach involves intervening as early as possible, and assessing a person’s housing situation as well as their personal and financial situation. We then explain the options available to them and what assistance might be available. The approach includes negotiating with people’s families, lenders, landlords, and the courts to try to maintain their existing accommodation.

We also seek to ensure there is access to appropriate support services to help people sustain their accommodation in both the short term and the long term.
The following chart shows the pathway followed by clients with a housing need or problem.

1. Housing need or problem
2. Housing advice and information
3. Housing register application and assessment of need
4. Urgent need or at risk of homelessness
   - Housing options advice and assessment under homelessness legislation
   - Stay put
     - Negotiate/mediate with:
       - family/friends
       - landlord
       - mortgage provider
   - Alternative accommodation
     - private rented/Homes 4 U
     - RP short term accommodation
     - hostels
     - supported housing
5. Support available to maintain accommodation
   - floating housing support
   - other support from voluntary sector
   - support from health and social care or other statutory services
6. Move on
   - Housing applicant bids under Guildford Homechoice
7. Successful bid
   - Offer of property – no penalty for refusal
8. Support available to sustain tenancy
9. Further housing need or problem?
Partnerships

We work in partnership with a range of agencies, all of which support our customers and help address their housing and other needs.

The diagram below shows the partners who contribute to the prevention of homelessness in the borough.

The principal partnerships and projects are set out below.

Work with hostels and supported housing providers
We have continued to work in partnership with the local hostels and supported housing providers to prevent homelessness. This has included implementing a Preventing Evictions Protocol that outlines the steps to take and agencies to contact before taking eviction proceedings.

We have also developed a reconnection policy for rough sleepers and those without a local connection to the borough. Other agencies have adopted these as models of good practice. For example, Surrey County Council’s Youth Support Service has used this for all their chosen providers of accommodation across the county.
The hostel providers have also developed a protocol to allow the Homeless Outreach and Support Team to assess clients on site and access accommodation to help them move on from hostel accommodation. This has enabled our Housing Options team to concentrate on more complex, vulnerable households, because less complex cases can access meaningful advice and assistance on site.

It is important to acknowledge that the hostel and floating support providers in receipt of Supporting People funding have worked hard to identify, implement and manage cost-efficiency savings and we recognise that it would be extremely difficult to sustain further reductions.

**Homeless Outreach and Support Team (HOST)**

We have directly commissioned outreach services for rough sleepers since 2003, although we originally began targeting help for this client base in 1998. The inclusion of non-statutory single homeless people and rough sleepers in our prevention approach has been very successful.

The current service provider (Stonham HA – part of Home Group) has just been awarded the tender a second time to deliver the outreach service for the next two years until March 2015. The contract provides a service to those who are rough sleeping, or at risk of doing so. It particularly benefits those who might not normally access services via the traditional route of visiting the Council’s housing advice service.

HOST provides a range of services, including:

- early intervention to contact and assess rough sleepers
- resettlement work to place people into appropriate accommodation
- tenancy sustainment work to assist former rough sleepers to maintain their homes
- preventing a return to entrenched street sleeping
- support to enable rough sleepers to find an alternative to the streets.

The team works closely with the Number Five night shelter and Guildford Action Drop in Centre to link with any new rough sleepers or single homeless people in the area. There are also close links with the police and other partnership agencies.

HOST also enables rough sleepers with no connection to Guildford to move back to their home area.

**Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP)**

Linked to our work with the hostels and HOST, we have co-ordinated emergency winter weather arrangements for rough sleepers over the last three years in the boroughs of Guildford, Waverley, Surrey Heath and Woking. When temperatures fall to zero degrees or below for three or more consecutive nights, we arrange to identify and contact people sleeping rough and ensure they have a bed for the night. This includes those who would not normally be eligible for help such as those with no recourse to public funds.

**Homeless 16 and 17 year olds**

Historically there had been difficulties in agreeing the responsibility for homeless 16 and 17 year olds between the borough and district housing services and Surrey County Council’s Children’s Social Services teams in Surrey. Despite having a joint working protocol, all concerned recognised that we were not helping young homeless people properly and as a result too many were finding themselves placed in bed and breakfast accommodation.
Surrey County Council arranged a Rapid Improvement Event in March 2012, to identify ways to improve the service for homeless young people in Surrey, especially those aged 16 or 17. The event included the 11 borough and district councils, Children’s Services, and the Youth Support Service together with housing providers. It was very successful and led to an action plan to streamline the service for this client group. A new arrangement commenced in November 2012 making the Youth Support Service the first point of contact for all homeless young people in Surrey. They have access to emergency accommodation and a small number of assessment beds. The partners are monitoring the new service and joint working arrangements, together with actions remaining from the original plan.

Work with Offenders
Offenders are a vulnerable group and are likely to re-offend if they become homeless. We work closely with colleagues in the police, probation and prison service to ensure we keep this risk to a minimum.

We have worked with probation colleagues to update the housing advice and assistance protocol (on behalf of the other Surrey borough and districts). We also represent the other councils on the Strategic Management Board for the Multi- Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).

The Surrey Homelessness Alliance
We also work closely with other statutory agencies in implementing change. The DCLG has appointed us as the lead council to co-ordinate a Surrey wide action plan to assist single homeless persons in all 11 boroughs and districts. A key objective is to ensure that single homeless people receive the same minimum offer and level of service in whichever Surrey borough they live.

The Surrey County Council Family Support Programme
The Government has estimated that there are 120,000 troubled families in England, of which approximately 1,050 are resident in Surrey. A substantial amount of time and money is spent by local service providers responding to the needs of these families, particularly because of concerns about the safety of children, truancy, mental health, drug or alcohol dependency problems, serious debt or involvement in crime or nuisance behaviour. The Government has provided funding for targeted intervention with these families.

In conjunction with Surrey County Council and other agencies in the area, we have set up a Guildford Family Support Team that will work with families to address school attendance, employment and anti-social behaviour and improve outcomes for up to 140 vulnerable families by March 2015.

A ‘virtual team’ of family support professionals from a range of local agencies will come together to work as part of a ‘Team Around the Family’ for each of the families in the programme. Each family will have their own Family Coordinator who will provide intensive outreach support for approximately 12 weeks, depending on need. Positive goals and priorities will be at the forefront of a Family Support Plan for each family, including preventing homelessness. Effective family support practice and a sustainable model of partnership working will be at the heart of our success criteria, and regular review and progress checking will ensure it is successful.

Domestic abuse
We work closely with other agencies to support those affected by domestic abuse and have an effective relationship with the Domestic Abuse Outreach Service (Guildford and
We actively participate in the Guildford and Waverley Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), which addresses the needs of households affected by domestic abuse.

Guildford is the lead for housing on the MARAC core steering group, representing the 11 Surrey housing authorities to ensure good practice in managing domestic abuse and honour-based threats of violence.

We also provide a “Sanctuary Scheme” in conjunction with the police and fire service, which can assist in cases of domestic violence where the perpetrator does not reside with the victim. Where appropriate, this involves implementing a range of security measures to make it safe for the victim to remain where they live. It is important that we maintain and protect this scheme so that victims of domestic violence are not forced to flee their homes and become homeless to escape a violent partner.

The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)\(^8\) – Healthy Guildford Group\(^9\)

The Council is a key member of the LSP and has a number of sub-groups including the Healthy Guildford Group. This group considers inequalities in health and associated life expectancy together with promoting educational achievement and improving opportunities for vulnerable people. The LSP has been proactive in highlighting the issues we face through the introduction of welfare reform and in considering family poverty and employment Initiatives.

Work with the LSP and partner agencies offers future opportunities raising awareness of the challenges we face tackling welfare reform, poverty and health inequalities due to homelessness.

**Housing and Employment Support**

A recent initiative has been our involvement in the Housing Employment Local Partnership (HELP)\(^10\) project, along with four other Surrey Councils (Elmbridge, Epsom & Ewell, Mole Valley and Tandridge) and a number of Registered Providers (Elmbridge Housing Trust, Mole Valley Housing Association and Rosebery Housing Association).

We have an employment advisor based within the Housing Advice Service for two days a week to assist tenants or other people in housing need into employment, education and training as part of a wider enhanced housing options approach. The scheme helped over ten people into a job within the first six months of its introduction, and helped others become ‘job ready’ through accessing training and education.

Access to employment is an increasing priority for our customers who are in receipt of state benefits and is key to empowering people’s independence. We hope to build upon this in the new strategy.

**Money advice**

We have directly commissioned money advice services from Ash CAB for several years and since 2011 have increased this funding and provided funding to Guildford CAB.

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8 The Local Strategic Partnership was disbanded in April 2013 and a new local Public Services Board is expected to replace it.
9 The Healthy Guildford group will become a local Health and Wellbeing Board and existing work streams will continue through this group.
10 This project closed at the end of March 2013 but a new project on similar lines is being set up in partnership with Surrey Lifelong Learning Partnership from June 2013.
The CAB Money Advice Service has continued to offer a holistic approach to the provision of independent debt advice.

The CAB support our housing options work and carry out housing casework on behalf of clients and they too focus on preventing homelessness. We work jointly on some cases and they take referrals at our request. Their assistance is invaluable to our service.

We also work with SurreySave, the credit union, and although this service is still at an early stage it will increasingly offer affordable credit to a wider range of customers.

**Court Housing Desk Service**

We have recently begun working more closely with the CAB court help desk and received a one-off grant in 2012 from DCLG to increase the service capacity at Guildford County Court.

**Supporting People (SP)**

Surrey County Council commission a range of housing related support services through Supporting People funding, although this grant is no longer ring fenced. Many services in the borough benefit from this funding, particularly the hostels, supported housing and floating housing support.

Although Surrey County Council is responsible for the contracts, we work closely with the service providers and Surrey County Council to ensure that they can address local needs and priorities. This is important as the SP budget is under considerable pressure and significant reductions are required over the next two to three years. This may have a disproportionate impact on this area as we have far more hostel and supported housing provision than any other borough or district across the county.

We remain committed to providing an evidence base to illustrate the importance and value of SP funded services. We believe that savings made through reductions in SP funding are likely to be outweighed by the cost to statutory services such as health and criminal justice in dealing with the effects of support being withdrawn.

**Rosebery Housing Association**

We currently lease four blocks of flats (formerly used as temporary accommodation) to Rosebery Housing Association and have retained our nomination rights to these properties. The flats are let on assured shorthold tenancies and are used to house families that are less likely to manage in private rented accommodation. These are often younger households or those with some support needs. We work closely with Rosebery to ensure such households receive the right support and move on either to social rented housing or the private sector as appropriate. This has provided us with options that are more flexible. We can also use the flats as emergency temporary accommodation if necessary.

**Faith and Community groups**

The faith and community sector have various projects that complement the work done by all agencies to prevent homelessness and support vulnerable people. They also have a vital role in raising awareness about homelessness in their communities and signposting to other services. They are also responsive to changing needs – for example, they have developed food banks to help those in severe financial difficulty.

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11 Supporting People is a funding stream established in 2003 to pay for housing related support services.
Other Council services
Although our internal working arrangements across the Council are not partnerships as such, they are essential to the way we help and support customers.

Our role as the largest social landlord in the borough means that we are often working with the same customers in a different capacity and this distinction is important to maintain. However this places us in an excellent position to ensure that evictions are always a last resort. We can work jointly to achieve this aim.

Likewise, our work with Revenues and Payments, particularly the housing benefit section, is critical and makes a significant contribution to the prevention of homelessness locally. We have effective working arrangements that are both proactive and responsive as necessary. The use of discretionary housing payments to support households in financial difficulty to allow them to access alternative housing or maintaining their home is invaluable and will continue to be in the future.

We also work closely with Operational Services and Parks and Leisure. Rough sleepers use our car parks and open spaces to sleep and to camp. Close liaison with the car park attendants and the park rangers helps us make contact with rough sleepers to ensure they can access help as well as overcome problems associated with anti-social behaviour. Our Arts and sports development officers have also worked with Guildford Action Drop-in Centre and the hostels to encourage access to sport and other activities.

Links are also in place with our Economic Development service regarding town centre management and access to employment opportunities.

The above list of projects and partnerships is not exhaustive but illustrates the wide range of work and activities that contribute to and support our services to prevent homelessness.

Alongside the partnerships listed above, we also work with a range of statutory and voluntary agencies on a case-by-case basis and this will remain a priority.

Consultation
Views of Customers and Stakeholders
Although the importance of partnership working underpins what we do, the way we deliver services to individual customers is paramount. The views of customers and stakeholders are vital to help shape our services and to ensure we can meet people’s needs. We have therefore consulted widely to develop this strategy.

Customers
The consultation covered both existing and former service users including:
- current customers of our housing options services during their face-to-face interviews
- previous housing options customers (both those where prevention was successful and those where it was not) via a telephone survey
- rough sleepers and non priority single homeless people that use the drop in centre or reside in local hostels
- previous bed and breakfast customers.

We mainly used telephone interviews but carried out some face-to-face interviews where appropriate (for example with rough sleepers). Some partner agencies assisted with this
Other Stakeholders
We also sought views from partner agencies and organisations – including homeless service providers, the CAB, housing associations, private landlords and statutory providers (such as the Police, GPs and Social Services). We have also had feedback from the wider voluntary and faith sector. This has largely been via an online survey. The Tenants’ Action Group also completed a written survey.

Feedback from the consultation
The aim of the consultation was to try to focus on identifying practical ways in which we can make a difference, in particular using the ideas of people who are experiencing, or have experienced, homelessness.

When asked what more we could do to help prevent their homelessness, those that responded made a wide range of comments.

Some customers have understandable but unrealistic expectations about social housing availability.

“Given me a little starter place so I could rebuild my life and pay my own way once back on feet”

“I just want somewhere to live, to rebuild my life”

“Given me a flat straight away instead of putting me in a hostel”

“Given me the option of a bedsit so I could get myself back to work and have a decent lifestyle”

“Simply getting on to registers, seeing people can take too long. Homelessness is an immediate problem”

Other responses indicated customer satisfaction
“Nothing. The advice I received was great and helpful”

“My situation was difficult and it seems to me that everything that could be done was done”

“Thank goodness the system was there for me!”

Stakeholders identified an increase in numbers of young people presenting as homeless
“A greater number of younger people are appearing at the drop-in centre and some give the impression that they take what is provided for granted”

“…and lack of supported housing providers for young people with high support needs”
“Growth in young homeless people”

Alcohol and drug use were identified as key challenges and barriers faced by stakeholders in preventing homelessness
“Alcohol and drugs misuse means that often the help is refused or is taken away from them as they cannot break their habits”

“Drug and alcohol use, the impact on their lifestyle as a result”

“The extent to which other factors like drugs/alcohol prevent them from accessing No. 5”

“Many do not want to go to night shelters as they are often surrounded by people with substance misuse problems which can exacerbate their own struggles”

“Access to housing is key to maximise and sustain engagement in substance misuse treatment”

“Substance misuse (chaotic/anti-social behaviours)”

Stakeholders identified legal highs as an emerging trend
“Legal highs creeping from young into older drinker groups”

“Legal high use replacing drug addiction but not seen by user as drug addiction”

“use of legal highs”

Issues around debt were also highlighted as key concerns
“being unable to move people on with rent arrears”

“Historic debt with local boroughs”

“More people than ever are becoming homeless due to debt issue (eviction the 2nd time around is becoming more common across the country)”

Lack of appropriate affordable accommodation was a consistent theme throughout stakeholder feedback
“Lack of affordable private rented accommodation and lack of emergency accommodation”

“Not having enough accommodation to meet demand”

“Accessible housing for those stable on medication from drug/alcohol misuse, those still using drugs/alcohol”

“As there is no homeless provision in north Surrey and minimal in east Surrey, this is a fairly large gap!”

“More housing options and assessment beds”

“More mental health and specialised accommodations”

The value of the work done by our partner agencies was recognised
“GACC best help – made me feel better and positive about myself”

“I didn’t understand the system – HOST explained and got me organised and back on my feet starting at No. 5 YRP – brilliant!”
The consultation generated a number of suggestions

Stakeholders

“Help in avoiding evictions in future e.g. a discretionary fund to clear some arrears alongside the tenant starting to make regular payments or some family intervention services to help people sustain tenancies where there is ASB or nuisance?”

“Create a single point of access – enable all homeless providers to be part of this”

“It would be very useful for the social services team to have some training set up to share information about housing. The majority of people seem to think that social services and housing are the same so it would be useful to have information about who to talk to and who to refer people to”

“More integrated and holistic co-commissioning as homelessness is not just a housing issue”

“Hospital buy-in and approach to our client group is a major concern”

“Employment and independence is the key theme underpinning all this. The HELP scheme has been a great initiative”

“[There should be] perhaps some kind of commitment to move-on from supported housing, to avoid services ‘sitting up’.

[Could rough sleepers be dealt with via a] “community panel decision/offer” including [different] agencies if they are appropriate to the support to ensure that the rough sleeper has been fairly addressed and that the pressure of outcome is not owned by one agency”

“In the case of B&B accommodation. If this is the only option open to a vulnerable person, can we look at placing them locally in order for them to continue to have access to supporting service”

“Although there are already some multi agency meetings throughout the county, I feel as some areas have high turnover of staff, it is important that promotion of services available is made aware to all”

“The council’s debt collection strategy and use of bailiffs is not included. It may mean potentially that bailiffs collecting for Council Tax or Parking Penalties cause problems by increasing rent arrears. We would argue that this is an important consideration”

“The LAS scheme doesn’t replace loans offered from the Social Fund. It is for “grants” and furniture when in crisis”

“Access to employment should perhaps be primarily focused on young people because they are the most disadvantaged with low benefit, no affordable housing and a lack of hope or distrust in the mainstream that could undermine community in the longer term if not addressed. Combine with work on care leavers”
Clients
“*To be encouraged to accept low paid employment so as to feel needed and not rejected*”

“*Encourage further participation in community groups to publicise what’s on offer*”

“*Deal with under-occupation*”

“*Set up a register of rooms available*”

Full details of the consultation are available on request.
Challenges and action plans

In the next section of this strategy, we consider the new risks and challenges we face, taking account of the Government’s ten local challenges to achieve gold standard services. It examines our three objectives and sets out the actions we will take to achieve them and how we will measure results.

3. Service delivery, strategic partnerships and communication

Funding

We are extremely fortunate in that we receive significant annual grant funding of £350,000 from the DCLG, which pays for a number of our core services. This grant is not ring fenced and from April 2013 has been included in the Council’s overall grant settlement and is included in the Business Rates Retention scheme. The DCLG has indicated that this settlement will still include the same amount for homelessness prevention. However even if this is the case as our overall grant is expected to fall in 2014-15, there will be competition with other priorities for use of the funding. We also expect further reductions in 2015-16 following the Comprehensive Spending Review, which will take place in 2014.

Our ability to deliver services is constrained by our funding and that of our partner agencies. Over the period covered by this strategy, we will need to demonstrate that our services are cost effective, and make a sound business case to maintain all our services – both our direct services, and those we commission from others. We will also need to find our share of efficiency savings and other budget savings in the future.

Quality of service delivery

The most important aspect of our service is that we ensure we comply with our statutory duties correctly.

We have a duty to provide advice and assistance to all households facing homelessness and may have a duty to provide interim or temporary accommodation pending an offer of permanent\textsuperscript{12} housing. If we accept a homeless application, we must reach a decision on that application and enable the applicant to request a formal review of the decision if they wish to challenge it. These are actions we must carry out directly and cannot delegate them to another party.

This is the most basic level of service we can provide. We have however always been proactive and recognise that homeless people often have extensive needs and require support to secure and maintain accommodation. The government report \textit{Making Every Contact Count} emphasises this point, and their wider expectations of our service delivery.

The ten local challenges to achieve gold standard services

The government believes that councils can provide excellent homelessness prevention services. In April 2013, the Housing Minister announced that a new Gold Standard would

\textsuperscript{12} Permanent housing means housing that offers security of tenure for at least two years.
Draft Homelessness Strategy 2013 - 2018 (June 2013)                                    Annex 1

set the bar for local homelessness services, and would be backed by a peer-led support and training scheme. He urged councils to strive to achieve the Gold Standard by making a first step continuous improvement pledge.

The ten local challenges the government poses to the housing sector are to:

- adopt a corporate commitment to prevent homelessness which has buy in across all local council services
- actively work in partnership with voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs
- offer a housing options prevention service, including written advice, to all clients
- adopt a No Second Night Out model\(^\text{13}\) (to tackle rough sleeping) or an effective local alternative
- have housing pathways agreed or in development with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support
- develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both clients and landlords
- actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme
- have a homelessness strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and is reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs
- not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in bed and breakfast accommodation
- not place any families in bed and breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and then for no longer than six weeks

Our service currently meets most, if not all, of these challenges and this new strategy will help ensure that we continue to do so.

The most difficult aspects of this are implementing the no second night out model and guaranteeing we will not use bed and breakfast as emergency or temporary accommodation for young people or families.

Assessing our services
Our ongoing priority is to ensure that our service is of the right quality and provides the right help to the right people at the right time.

We have always worked closely with DCLG to ensure that we comply with their guidance and seek to apply best practice in our service delivery. We monitor our service closely and

\(^{13}\) This is a model developed in London and larger cities to address the needs of people who become street homeless for the first time. It is a challenging target and the model does not fit as well in smaller towns or areas with limited services hence the suggestion of an alternative local model.
compare ourselves to our peers in both Surrey and elsewhere, by benchmarking our services through exercises run by the Housing Quality Network (HQN).

The gold standard promoted by DCLG is about continuously improving services. Those participating council must first undertake a peer review with a minimum of two other councils using a diagnostic toolkit and achieve a score of at least 60 per cent. They may then apply for the Gold Standard either all at once or in stages for a minimum of three challenges at a time seeking to achieve Bronze, Silver and then Gold.

We propose to take up their challenge and seek to achieve the gold standard for our services over the next two years.

**Fundamental service review**
Homelessness services are included in the Council’s programme of Fundamental Service Reviews in 2013. The review will assess if our service is operating as efficiently and effectively as possible, and will ensure that we maintain service levels in the face of financial pressures. The work in seeking to achieve the gold standard will complement this review and identify areas where we can improve our services.

The consultation carried out for this strategy will feed into the review, and we will continue with the following actions:

- monitoring our current service costs and performance
- benchmarking and comparing service standards, targets and performance with others
- consulting our customers and key stakeholders to assess current and future needs
- looking for ways to continuously improve our service
- exploring options for alternative service provision to deliver value for money.

**Strategic Partnerships**
The previous chapter highlighted our existing range of homelessness prevention services including the many projects and partnerships we support. The strength and viability of these initiatives, protocols and joint working arrangements can make all the difference to our effectiveness.

Many of our partner agencies are themselves undergoing changes and facing similar financial pressures over the next five years and we need to understand and respond to such changes.

**Health and Social Care**
Key changes include major health reforms – in particular the transfer of responsibilities for public health to the Surrey County Council and the creation of the Health and Wellbeing boards from April 2013. The board allows representatives of the NHS (Clinical Commissioning Groups), public health, social care, local councillors, district and borough representatives and user representatives to work together to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Surrey. This new partnership will identify opportunities for collaboration and integration across agencies, and will develop direct links to services users, patients and local stakeholders. The board will produce a county health and well being strategy and will identify priorities for service delivery in both health and social care, taking account of the expected pressures on funding.
The links between health and homelessness are recognised but there remain health inequalities for those that are homeless or insecurely housed. Mental health, drug and alcohol services are vital, as are basic primary health care requirements such as being able to see a GP, health visitor or a dentist, and access routine health screening services.

We need to ensure we understand the new arrangements, identify our local needs, and are able to feed these into the new strategic arrangements.

**Criminal justice**

We work closely with the police and probation services and have successful partnership arrangements at various at strategic and operational level that are important to maintain.

There are proposals to outsource 80 per cent of probation service work to the private sector by 2014, which will necessitate a review of many of these joint arrangements.

Other changes are also inevitable so we need to be responsive to ensure that we minimise any impact on services locally. Where change occurs, we need to be adaptable and work to achieve the best outcomes we can for our customers.

**Other Surrey borough and district councils**

The Surrey-wide homelessness action plan offers a useful platform for future cross-boundary work. Homeless people often move around to access services and, given the wide range of provision available in Guildford, we attract this client group from other areas, so must be mindful of how we can manage this in the longer term.

One of the effects of the government’s localism agenda is that local authorities are strengthening the local connection criteria in their allocation policies. Clients with no connection to the borough cannot access hostels, but may not be eligible for housing in their home area – for example if they have been away from their home area for some time or if they have rent arrears. This increases the risk of the client sleeping rough.

As district and borough councils, we also need to maximise the opportunities for joint working as we all face similar challenges with limited resources. We already provide joint training and have a range of joint protocols with other agencies, but need to build upon this in the future and offer mutual support and assistance.

**Communications**

It is vital that we have an effective communications plan to support this strategy and our work with other agencies. The first step in preventing homelessness is awareness of the issue and knowing where to get help. We need to target our communications carefully so the message reaches the right people. We will have limited capacity to deliver advice and information directly to everyone that needs it but can seek to encourage agencies to have people that can act as champions about homelessness and housing.

Although we have links with the faith sector, who are particularly supportive of the voluntary sector work with the homeless, we have not made the best use of their expertise, commitment and enthusiasm, and need to build on the links we already have.

Likewise, we have not been proactive with the business sector and we recognise there is more that they can contribute to this work, particularly around employment and training in response to welfare reform.
The future success of this strategy will depend upon getting the basics right. Therefore our first action plan considers the actions and priorities we must implement to ensure that our services are fit for purpose, that we can sustain and improve our partnership working, and that we meet the changing needs of customers and our stakeholders.
### ACTION PLAN 1 - Service delivery, strategic partnerships and communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Action number</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Target Date</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Service delivery</td>
<td>1 A-1</td>
<td>Undertake a fundamental review of our homelessness service.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services</td>
<td>June 2014</td>
<td>Review undertaken. Report issued recommending how service can be tailored to meet current and emerging needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 A-2</td>
<td>Arrange a peer review of our service.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services</td>
<td>January 2014</td>
<td>Service reviewed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 A-3</td>
<td>Benchmark our services against others.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services</td>
<td>January 2014</td>
<td>Costs and procedures compared. Improvements identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 A-4</td>
<td>Seek to achieve the gold standard set by DCLG.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services</td>
<td>June 2015</td>
<td>Procedures in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 A-5</td>
<td>Annual consultation with customers.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services</td>
<td>April 2014 (and annually)</td>
<td>Customers consulted and report issued.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 A-6</td>
<td>Provide feedback to our partner agencies, learn from case studies and share examples of good practice.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership working</td>
<td>1 B-1</td>
<td>Obtain partner commitment to support this strategy through bite-sized workshops and flash surgeries, utilising existing forums.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services</td>
<td>September 2013 and ongoing</td>
<td>Commitment in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 B-2</td>
<td>Review representation on strategic groups and membership of key forums.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services</td>
<td>April 2014 and ongoing</td>
<td>Review completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 B-3</td>
<td>Review Hospital discharge protocol and investigate potential for Surrey wide hospital discharge protocol.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services and other Surrey Councils</td>
<td>April 2014</td>
<td>Training delivered and learning opportunities maximised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 B-4</td>
<td>Implement housing advice and Probation,</td>
<td></td>
<td>July 2013 and</td>
<td>Revised protocol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Draft Homelessness Strategy 2013 - 2018 (June 2013)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Annex 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>---</td>
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<td>---------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>assistance for offenders’ protocol when revisions agreed. Continue partnership work with Probation to keep key contacts up to date.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services</td>
<td>ongoing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 B-5</td>
<td>Review the Preventing Evictions Protocol, which advises hostel providers on the steps to take and agencies to contact before taking eviction proceedings.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services</td>
<td>September 2013 and ongoing</td>
<td>Protocol implemented and kept updated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 B-6</td>
<td>Review and identify opportunities for joint training.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services</td>
<td>October 2013 and ongoing</td>
<td>Review completed and resources targeted effectively.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 B-7</td>
<td>Respond to changes in other agencies and internally.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 B-8</td>
<td>Work in partnership to review the delivery of services to meet the needs of people with substance misuse issues.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services, Public Health, other councils, hostel providers</td>
<td>September 2014</td>
<td>Appropriate services in place for people with substance misuse issues.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 B-9</td>
<td>Work jointly with police and homelessness service providers to identify trends and raise awareness about support in relation to legal highs.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services, Police, service providers</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>Develop a communication plan to support the strategy. Review existing methods of communication and target groups.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services, PR and marketing</td>
<td>April 2014</td>
<td>Plan in place.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 C-2</td>
<td>Develop awareness within the faith based community offering information and advice and giving suggestions for practical assistance which doesn’t undermine or increase homelessness.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services</td>
<td>April 2014</td>
<td>Guidance note for faith communities produced and circulated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 C-3</td>
<td>Review ways of working with schools to raise awareness of homelessness.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services, YSS,</td>
<td>March 2014</td>
<td>Up to date information pack provided. Arrangements for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hostels and supported housing providers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>---</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 C-4</td>
<td>Involve service users in the production of information leaflets and other communications material to raise public awareness about homelessness. Aim to reduce the gap between perception and reality concerning what housing is available and what homelessness services can offer.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services, HOST, Hostel Providers.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Materials produced and distributed around the borough. People become more aware of what is on offer, and are encouraged to avoid homelessness.

| 1 C-5 | Review website and content | Housing Advice Services and Web Team | Ongoing |

Website content remains informative and current.
4. Managing the impact of welfare change

The main area of uncertainty for us is the impact of the next phase of welfare reforms. This section examines some of the changes together with how they might affect our ability to help people in future.

The Government recognises that these changes will increase the number of people becoming homeless, and will increase risk of homelessness for many more.

The key objectives of the reforms are:
- to replace the complex mix of out of work benefits and tax credits with a single Universal Credit payment
- to introduce a single welfare to work programme
- to reassess claims of disability and incapacity related benefit, and particularly individuals’ capability to work
- to cap the total amount of benefit that working age people can receive so that workless households no longer receive more in benefits than the average earnings of working households

The changes began some time ago but the most significant of these come in between April 2013 and December 2017.

The main changes are summarised in the box below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Welfare Reforms – Time line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre April 2013</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• April 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Local Housing Allowance reduced to 30th percentile and capped at £400 pw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o increased deductions for non-dependants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o increased room allocation for disabled and non-resident carer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Jan 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o under 35’s only receive shared accommodation rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• April 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o LHA rate capped at £1600 per month for 4 bedroomed or larger homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Local Housing Allowance fixed rate for year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Oct 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o greater sanctions for those on Job Seekers and Employment Support Allowances (risk of loss of benefit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post April 2013</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Housing Benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o under occupation in the social rented sector – the under-occupation charge, or ‘bedroom tax’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Local Housing Allowance increases by Consumer Price Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to be replaced by Personal Independence Payments (PIPS)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Welfare Reform Act March 2012 introduces a wide range of changes to the benefits system with the overall aim of encouraging people to get back into work and ensuring that the system ‘makes work pay’ and discourages people from remaining on benefit.

Whilst some of the changes will not individually make a huge dent in households’ finances, it is the cumulative effect of all these changes occurring simultaneously which in some cases will lead to people falling into debt quickly.

These changes are far-reaching, and may lead to an increase in homelessness particularly relating to changes to housing benefit.

Benefit take up in the borough has increased considerably in recent years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July- September 2013</td>
<td>Introduction of the household weekly benefit cap for those on out of work benefits (£500 for families)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2013</td>
<td>Introduction of Universal Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2014</td>
<td>Reform of Pension Credit to include a housing credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2017</td>
<td>Universal Credit migration completed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Due to the economic situation, there has been an increased rate of take-up of housing benefit by private tenants\textsuperscript{14} over the last three years.

A report published in March 2013 by The Building and Social Housing Foundation found that the majority of new housing benefit claimants were in work.

The number of housing benefit claimants in Great Britain increased by 300,000 to 4.95 million between January 2010 and December 2011. Households containing at least one employed adult made 93 per cent of new housing benefit claims made over this period.

This is a departure from previous trends, where the number of households claiming housing benefit was closely linked to employment figures and a greater proportion of new claimants were out of work. The report is unclear about the cause of this, but suggests that it is due to a reduction in wages combined with increasing rent levels.

**Local Housing Allowances**

Many households live in the private rented sector and we have assisted many households secure private rented housing to prevent them becoming homeless. Some 40 per cent of housing applicants live in private rented housing, and many of these are reliant on housing benefit - Local Housing Allowance (LHA) - to pay their rent.

Some of the changes introduced to the LHA are already having an impact on private sector tenants.

LHA rates have reduced by setting the level payable at the 30\textsuperscript{th} percentile of rents rather than the 50\textsuperscript{th} percentile. This presumes that three out of ten privately rented properties on the market are available at this rate or less. In practice, this is not necessarily the case.

The LHA rates from April 2013 are set out in the following table.

\textsuperscript{14} In this table private rents include housing association tenants as historically these statistics were not separated.
Local housing allowance (LHA) rates
01/04/2013 - 31/03/2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of rooms</th>
<th>Guildford</th>
<th>Blackwater Valley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shared accommodation</td>
<td>£360.01pm</td>
<td>£320.19pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 bedroom</td>
<td>£725.01pm</td>
<td>£599.99pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 bedroom</td>
<td>£919.79pm</td>
<td>£750.01pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 bedroom</td>
<td>£1174.98pm</td>
<td>£895.01pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 bedroom</td>
<td>£1600.00pm</td>
<td>£1300.00pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We carried out a short survey in November 2012, which found that only 23 properties out of 280 advertised were within the LHA rates, and the average shortfall in rent was 23 per cent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property type</th>
<th>1 bedroom</th>
<th>2 bedroom</th>
<th>3 bedroom</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ave. no. of available homes (total)</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ave. no. of available homes (within LHA)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within LHA</td>
<td>9.55%</td>
<td>7.06%</td>
<td>8.04%</td>
<td>8.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest rent</td>
<td>£595</td>
<td>£795</td>
<td>£800</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest rent</td>
<td>£1150</td>
<td>£1800</td>
<td>£2950</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average rent</td>
<td>£839.85</td>
<td>£1162.53</td>
<td>£1406.87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current LHA</td>
<td>£715.00</td>
<td>£899.99</td>
<td>£1149.98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% amount ave. rent over LHA</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is making it more difficult to secure private rented housing for households at risk of homelessness.

Increasingly tenants are finding there is a shortfall between their benefit and their rent. Where this occurs, they can apply to the benefits section for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP). Our Housing Advice and Housing Benefit teams work jointly to help as many tenants as possible, although we cannot guarantee that every application for DHP will be successful and funding is limited. We have had some success negotiating with landlords and have so far been able to assist many of those affected. As more changes take effect this will become increasingly difficult.

15 This covers Ash and Tongham
The benefit cap
The new benefit cap will apply to the combined income of households receiving the main out-of-work benefits, plus child benefit and child tax credits. It will start between July and September 2013.
The cap will be:
• £500 per week for couples and lone parents
• £350 per week for single adults

Families affected by the cap will initially only face cuts to any housing benefit or LHA as this is administratively simpler for the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) until they migrate to Universal Credit.

The cap will not apply to those that are working and other exemptions apply for those with disabilities. Currently around 60 households have been identified as potentially being affected by the cap - mainly those with three or more children. The majority live in the private rented sector, but about one third are Council or housing association tenants. Although the numbers are relatively low overall, the individual impact can be very significant and the income losses range from £376 to £9 per week, with the weekly average being £91. Twenty households will lose in excess of £100 per week, and eight will lose more than £200, of which five are social housing tenants.

Under-occupation of social housing
One of the most controversial changes introduced in April 2013 is the under-occupation benefit reduction for social housing tenants.

The cut is a fixed percentage of the rent eligible for housing benefit, set at 14 per cent for one extra bedroom and 25 per cent for two or more extra bedrooms.

At the start of the 2013-14 financial year, 486 Council and housing association tenants in receipt of housing benefit were affected (almost seven per cent of social housing tenants), with the average shortfall in rent being £16 and £28 respectively. 80 per cent (388) of those affected have one extra bedroom, with 96 having two or more spare bedrooms.

We have been in touch with all the Council tenants affected and, so far, only 50 have expressed interest in moving. Most say they will try to find a way to make up the shortfall but may have difficulty doing so. We are therefore offering advice about their options including the ability to take in a lodger to help with rent.

Universal Credit
Universal Credit (UC) is due to start in October 2013 for some claimants but the main impact will be from April 2014 as all new claimants go onto the new arrangements. UC will replace housing benefit between October 2014 and 2017.

The introduction of UC will involve a number of other changes that will affect vulnerable households.

UC will provide a single monthly payment to one member of the household, which will be paid in arrears. This will include any contribution towards rent but the amount will not be specified. There is no provision to pay benefit covering rent direct to the landlord, as is currently the case for all social housing tenants and many private sector tenants, although some limited exemptions apply for the most vulnerable groups.
The system is deliberately digital by default meaning that claimants will be expected to apply online, although there is recognition that some people will need assistance to do this.

The DWP will administer UC, therefore the role of the Council in delivering a housing benefits service will cease by 2017.

**Personal Independence Payments**

The new Personal Independence Payment (PIPs) will replace Disability Living Allowance (DLA) from 8 April 2013.

From 10 June 2013, DLA will no longer be available to any new claimant over the age of 16, although it will continue to be the relevant disability benefit for children under that age. Instead, all new claimants will make an application for PIP.

Existing DLA claimants will not be affected at all until 7 October 2013. After this date, those claimants who turn 16 and those with a relevant change of circumstances that must be notified will be invited to make an application for PIP. Those with existing awards will be contacted four or five months before the end of their award and invited to claim PIP.

Awards of DLA for all existing DLA claimants will continue until the DWP makes a decision on their entitlement to PIP. DLA claimants with indefinite awards whose circumstances do not change will not be affected until October 2015 at the earliest.

The PIP is based on an assessment of an individual’s ability to carry out a range of key activities necessary to everyday life. Fewer people are likely to qualify under the new arrangements and the overall benefit most people receive is likely to be lower. Many people with disabilities rely on these benefits to meet their day-to-day living costs and whilst the benefit cap will not affect them, their lower income may make it more difficult for them to manage financially. This in turn might affect their housing security, even for those that still qualify for their rent to be paid directly to their landlord, in cases where they have to pay service charges that are ineligible for benefit purposes, for example heating or lighting costs.

**Localisation of Council Tax Benefit**

Borough and District councils are now required to administer local council tax support schemes, but with a 10 per cent reduction in budget and protection for the elderly. This will bring a saving to central government, but has a knock-on effect for vulnerable people, and for local councils’ income collection.

We have developed our local scheme and sought to build in protection through the creation of a hardship fund. People can also arrange to pay monthly rather than in 10 instalments. We will monitor the scheme over the next few months and make adjustments from 2014 if necessary.

**Local Social Assistance Scheme**

A new local assistance scheme administered by Surrey County Council in partnership with the Surrey Citizens’ Advice Bureaux has replaced the social fund, which offered community care grants, crisis payments and loans.

The scheme will seek to assist people in meeting their immediate short-term needs for subsistence or financial support when they require assistance to maintain their independence within the community. This will mirror the old arrangement to some extent.
and help those that are homeless take up suitable housing options. The amount of funding will however be limited so we will need to monitor this locally.

Managing the impact of the changes
Clearly, the extent of the reforms is substantial and there is a potential cumulative effect on some households.

Surrey County Council commissioned some research in 2012 on the potential impact for some groups.\(^\text{16}\)

The following illustrates a case study of a typical ‘housing options’ client living in private rented housing who will be significantly worse off and require support in a number of ways. She is affected by the benefit cap so finding work will be her best solution but she may not be job ready and may have child care issues, given the ages of her children.

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\(^{16}\) [Link to the source of the research](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/556253/SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL-Preparing-for-the-impacts-of-welfare-reform-March2013-FINAL.pdf)
The areas we will need to address to help our customers manage the impact of the welfare changes include providing access to;

- financial and money advice
  - information and advice about benefits
  - budgeting and debt management
  - where to get affordable credit
- support to find work, relevant education and training
- tenancy support and advocacy
  - help to negotiate with landlords

We will also need to ensure that we can offer more extensive housing options advice to social housing tenants including self-help options such as mutual exchanges.

We already have much of this in place, and are able to signpost and refer customers to appropriate services. There is however a risk that the capacity of such services will be stretched too far so we must work jointly to find the best way of managing demands. We will work with our partners to review the way services are delivered and how referrals are prioritised.

We also need to ensure that our staff and those of our partners have the right skills and expertise to support people through these changes. For example, we are planning to create a post to focus on transfers and helping social housing tenants downsize.

Financial and Money Advice
We currently meet with Ash and Guildford CABx quarterly to monitor the demand for money advice and debt support as part of the current service level agreement we have in place. This forum is looking at ways to maximise access to such help.

Our Neighbourhood and Housing Management Service now has an in-house Money Advisor, who provides advice to housing applicants prior to being housed.

We promote Surrey Save to our tenants and housing applicants to encourage them to save. We also raise awareness of their ability to offer small and relatively cost effective loans compared to many of the payday loan companies. We also inform people of the risks associated with unauthorised lenders and loan sharks. We will continue to promote these types of messages to our customers directly and with our partners.

We are also working with Surrey Save and some of the stock holding councils in Surrey to agree the best way to help budget and manage payments from their accounts. They are investigating the use of payment cards which have set amounts of money allocated for specific purposes – in effect a type of electronic card-based ‘jam jar account’.

Access to Employment
We need to ensure people are able to get help to access employment education and training through the DWP work programme and other support arrangements including job clubs.

This will also involve improving the skills of those that are not yet job ready. It will be important to ensure people are able to access basic skills training including the use of computers.
The HELP project is being replaced by a new initiative in partnership with Surrey Lifelong Learning Partnership from June 2013. This will offer greater support for those not yet ready to take up employment and support digital inclusion. We hope that the new arrangements will provide added value for our more vulnerable customers.

**Future risks**

The welfare reforms will put added pressure on our resources. Although we have considered this in setting our budgets and the Government has made additional funding available to support the reforms, this may not be sufficient.

Although the Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) pot has increased to £206,000 this may not be enough to help all those affected and in the case of households facing homelessness we may have to top up rents directly outside the DHP framework. However, we cannot do this for households indefinitely so our ability to use the private rented sector market will also become increasingly limited. There is a heightened risk to the Council because we have a statutory duty to assist homeless households and there is already an increase in temporary accommodation for larger families.

Unless rents fall, some families will have to move and be prepared to accept smaller accommodation. With limited supply, this may lead to the use of more expensive short-term solutions to meet our statutory duties towards homeless households.

**CASE STUDY – JM**

JM and her family (partner and five children) came to us after being evicted from a property that they owned outside the borough. They bought the property with an interest only mortgage; the payments were affordable but due to mismanagement of their finances, the family were forced to surrender possession to the lender.

We found the family intentionally homeless, due to the manner in which they lost the property, but given the size of the family and the needs of the children, we helped them move into another home with joint assistance from Surrey Children’s Services. Housing Advice Services sourced the landlord and provided a rent deposit bond, whilst Children’s Services team paid the first month’s rent in advance.

Mindful of the future benefit caps, they were moved into a 3-bedroom property with a reception/dining room that the landlord was happy for them to use as an additional bedroom. We provided advice about the disproportionate effect that the cap may have on them due to their family size, but JM’s partner’s prospects of work were good. Their previous mismanagement of finances was primarily due to the partner’s alcohol problems, so as part of the package we referred him to SadAS and the family as a whole to Guildford Action for Families. We will continue to offer advice and support to sustain the tenancy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Action number</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Target Date</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corporate approach</td>
<td>2 A-1</td>
<td>Set up internal Welfare Reform management group to oversee our corporate approach and produce an internal action plan.</td>
<td>Housing Advice, Revenues and Payments, Neighbourhood and Housing Management, PR and Marketing</td>
<td>June 2013</td>
<td>Group set up. Action plan reviewed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 A-2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monitor welfare changes and their impact. Identify unforeseen themes and trends and action plan to meet need.</td>
<td>Housing Advice, Revenues and Payments, Neighbourhood and Housing Management, PR and Marketing</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 A-3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Build capacity within Housing Advice and other services to adapt to changing needs.</td>
<td>Housing Advice, Revenues and Payments, Neighbourhood and Housing Management, PR and Marketing</td>
<td>As per FSR</td>
<td>Resources are targeted effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 A-4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure training plans include benefit changes.</td>
<td>Housing Advice, Neighbourhood and Housing Management</td>
<td>July 2013 then annually</td>
<td>Appraisals completed identifying training needs. Training courses identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 A-5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monitor the use of Discretionary Housing Payments and ensure that the funding supports those most in need to reduce the</td>
<td>Housing Advice, Revenues and Payments,</td>
<td>Ongoing (review by September</td>
<td>Monitoring arrangements in place. Outcomes demonstrate effective use of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 A-6</td>
<td>Prepare for the introduction of Universal Credit and the role the Council might play in supporting customers making claims.</td>
<td>Revenues and Payments, Housing Advice, Neighbourhood and Housing Management, DWP, Social landlords, CAB</td>
<td>Dependent on release of details and guidance from central government</td>
<td>Partnership arrangements in place with DWP and other agencies. Council’s role clarified.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 B-1</td>
<td>Provide information on welfare changes and identify impact on people in housing need for partner agencies.</td>
<td>Housing Advice, Revenues and Payments, Neighbourhood and Housing Management, PR and Marketing</td>
<td>October 2013</td>
<td>Partner agencies informed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 B-2</td>
<td>Support the LSP Healthy Guildford Group (future Health and Well-being Board) deliver their action plan on welfare reform.</td>
<td>Housing Advice, Revenues and Payments, Neighbourhood and Housing Management, Corporate Development</td>
<td>April 2014</td>
<td>Action plan implemented.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 B-3</td>
<td>Work with the other Surrey Councils to address issues across the County.</td>
<td>Housing Advice, Revenues and Payments, Neighbourhood and Housing Management, Other Surrey Councils</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2 B-4</strong></td>
<td>Explore opportunities to work with partner agencies to monitor information relating to gambling and monitor trends.</td>
<td>Housing Advice, Voluntary sector</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Money advice and financial literacy</strong></td>
<td><strong>2 C-1</strong></td>
<td>Ensure that referral arrangements to Money and Financial Advice Services are understood and well publicised.</td>
<td>Housing Advice, Revenues and Payments, Neighbourhood and Housing Management, CABx, Surrey Save, Other voluntary sector partners, faith and community sector</td>
<td>July 2013</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Effective communications in place. Communications strategy implemented.</td>
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<td><strong>2 C-2</strong></td>
<td>Raise awareness of risks of using unauthorised lenders and the relative cost of pay day loans companies.</td>
<td>Housing Advice, Revenues and Payments, Neighbourhood and Housing Management, CABx</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Effective communications in place. Communications strategy implemented.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2C-3</strong></td>
<td>Promote Surrey Save services to tenants and other customers.</td>
<td>Housing Advice, Revenues and Payments, Neighbourhood and Housing Management</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Effective communications in place. Communications strategy implemented.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2 C-4</strong></td>
<td>Review CAB Money Advice Services and seek to maximise access to such services.</td>
<td>CAB, Housing Advice Services</td>
<td>October 2013</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Service reviewed.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2 C-5</strong></td>
<td>Work jointly with other councils and Surrey Save to investigate electronic card payment systems to help tenants manage finances.</td>
<td>Neighbourhood and Housing Management, Surrey Save, Woking, Runnymede and</td>
<td>October 2013</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Better financial management options available for tenants.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2 C-6</strong></td>
<td>Provide Pre tenancy financial advice to housing applicants.</td>
<td>Waverley councils</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Housing Advice, Neighbourhood and Housing Management</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2 C-7</strong></td>
<td>Review the range of financial advice and assistance for those in need.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Housing Advice Services and partner organisations</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment support</strong></td>
<td><strong>2 D-1</strong></td>
<td>Ensure we help tenants and housing applicants access support to get back into education training and employment.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Housing Advice Services, Neighbourhood and Housing Management, Surrey lifelong Learning Partnership, LSP</td>
<td>Ongoing (review March 2014)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2 D-2</strong></td>
<td>Promote access to job clubs.</td>
<td>Ongoing (review March 2014)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Housing Advice, Neighbourhood and Housing Management, Economic Development</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2 D-3</strong></td>
<td>Review the HELP project and widen remit increasing access to basic skills and other training. New management arrangements put in place.</td>
<td>June 2014 (Further review and funding agreement February 2014) New management arrangements in place.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Housing Advice Services, Surrey lifelong Learning Partnership, other partners</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2 D-4</strong></td>
<td>Support the Healthy Guildford Group work on family poverty and employment.</td>
<td>October 2013 Group action plan complete.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Healthy Guildford Group, Housing Advice Services</td>
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</table>
5. Sustaining and creating access to accommodation

This section considers the need to access suitable housing for those facing homelessness and in housing need. This is fundamental to the success of this strategy.

The housing market and access to affordable housing

The next five years are uncertain in respect of both the general economy and the housing market, which remains depressed. The private rented sector has been fundamental to our success in preventing homelessness to date. If private rental rates are above a level affordable to people on low incomes and benefits then our ability to prevent homelessness will be severely restricted. This in turn will increase the demand for social rented housing, which is already limited in supply.

There has also been a slower rate of delivery of new affordable housing as is the case nationally. This is due to a combination of factors, including:

- economic recession, a stagnant housing market, and a reduction in availability of mortgage finance resulting in less private development, which ordinarily provides affordable housing as part of planning obligations
- a reduction in grant funding from central government
- uncertainty from housing providers regarding the building of new affordable homes due to housing and welfare reforms
- a lack of available land for development in the borough

Social housing rents are also set to increase, for both new homes and existing social rented housing.

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) introduced a new Affordable Rent product in April 2011. Registered Providers are now able to charge up to 80 per cent of market rent, as opposed to the rent for social rented properties, which is closer to 50 per cent of market rent. Registered Providers are to use the difference between the social rent level and Affordable Rent to support borrowing in order to fund future affordable housing with more restricted levels of grant. Registered Providers are also realigning the rents of social rented homes to the higher Affordable Rent by agreement with the HCA, in order to increase resources for additional development.

However, there are increasing concerns that the rents under the new system are not affordable, and may even be higher than the maxima payable by housing benefit under the reformed system.

It is too early to see trends in behaviour resulting from the introduction of Affordable Rents. However in some individual cases, applicants who have successfully bid for a property have turned down the offer because they did not think they could afford the rent. There is some local evidence that such homes will not be affordable even to smaller families on benefit.

The example of a recent new build development illustrates our concerns about rent levels. When the rents were agreed, at the start of the build programme, the proposed amounts fell comfortably within housing benefit limits. However once the homes were completed and ready to occupy, the rents applied by the housing association included standard annual increases at just above the level of inflation. Housing benefit had not increased in the meantime, and in real terms had decreased. Thus when the properties were allocated the rents were very close to housing benefit limits. It is likely that within two years, as further
rent increases are applied and welfare reforms reduce the amount of benefit payable, the rents will exceed the maximum housing benefit payable. This means that a household’s tenancy may not be sustainable. In the example below, if a family with two children on out-of-work benefits is offered the three-bed house they will be affected by the benefit cap.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example of new development applying Affordable Rent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly rent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent as agreed in Sept 2011 pre development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent increases applied in accordance with rent policy (RPI +½%):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr-12 5.6% + ½%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr-13 2.6% + ½%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LHA (2013/14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent below LHA by:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whilst the Housing Development team have so far negotiated most rents to be within local housing allowance (housing benefit) maxima, this will become harder to assess when Universal Credit is introduced, because there will not be an identifiable amount of the overall benefit that is intended to cover rent.

The Council is now in a position to build rented housing again and has some sites in the pipeline. We will consider the level of rent we apply to the development to help cover our build costs and will ensure that our rents are affordable.

The challenge we face is how to sustain the tenancies of families whom we have placed in private rented accommodation, and create access to other forms of affordable accommodation.

Social rented housing

The aspiration of most households facing homelessness is social rented housing. As indicated in chapter two this is in very limited supply. It is therefore essential that we make best use of such housing to help those in the most housing need.

We have already adopted a tenancy strategy promoting the use of the new flexible tenancies introduced by the Localism Act 2011. We have put in a place a policy to let all Council homes on five-year tenancies after an initial one-year introductory tenancy from January 2013. A number of RPs have also begun using such tenancies and will increasingly do so in future.

We will not see the impact of flexible tenancies until 2018, but it will put us in a better position in the future.

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17 We were able to negotiate lower rents for the three bedroomed homes when the RP was advised about the risk of the benefit cap.
The Localism Act also provided for changes to housing allocations policies. Prior to this the legislation required councils to operate housing registers with limited exclusions meaning that most people (even those unlikely to be housed) could join the waiting list.

The Act allows councils to have greater freedom and we are now able to prioritise local needs above national policy.

Currently our housing register has 3700 applicants each placed in one of five priority bands A - E\textsuperscript{18}. Only those in Bands A-C stand any chance of being rehoused in social housing other than older people seeking sheltered housing. Our policy takes into account local connection to the borough and gives extra priority for those with a long-standing residential connection.

We are planning to review the allocation scheme to take account of this flexibility and have already carried out some preliminary consultation with housing applicants.

We do however need to ensure that this does not inadvertantly increase homelessness applications, as there is some evidence that this has occurred in some areas, where reports suggest that some households will insist on making a homeless application if they see no other chance of accessing social housing.

As indicated in the chapter on welfare reform we will be offering more help to people who under-occupy their homes. This will take some time but may start to free up larger homes for families in need. Likewise, we may be better able to dissuade tenants from evicting their children when there is room for them to remain at home.

The National Audit Office indicates that all social landlords are facing issues with social housing fraud and they estimate that some degree of fraud occurs in between five and ten per cent of tenancies. Although we do not consider the problem a major issue locally we must build on the initial work we have done to minimise its occurrence.

We work closely with the local RPs and need to consider what more we can do jointly to make better use of our stock and provide housing options for those in need.

The working arrangements we have with Rosebery Housing Association\textsuperscript{19} is a good example of a model that we could extend further.

Likewise, we need to maintain our excellent relationship with our supported housing providers, backed by clear nomination arrangements for the long term. We also need to help them maximise opportunities to increase their service capacity where possible.

Social landlords including the Council also take steps to evict tenants who fail to comply with their conditions of tenancy.

Housing Advice Services work closely with housing associations and our own Income Collection Team to prevent evictions where possible. When we receive early notification we are able to intervene, and often when a tenant that is avoiding their rent or income collection manager a different person can successfully engage the tenant.

\textsuperscript{18} Guildford Borough Council Allocations Policy \url{http://www.guildford.gov.uk/CHandler.ashx?id=8674&p=0}

\textsuperscript{19} See chapter 2
We need to ensure that our communication channels with social landlords remain sound, so that we are able to offer help to tenants facing eviction as early as possible. This will be even more important as the benefit changes take place. Many social housing tenants will have to pay their rent directly for the first time when Universal Credit is introduced.

We have an internal working group that is looking at how to support our tenants when the changes come in and we are also liaising with the housing associations. We will consider the use of local protocols to improve liaison about evictions. We also hope to encourage our Registered Providers to have a homelessness champion.

**CASE STUDY – COUNCIL TENANT**

A Council tenant with rent arrears had breached their suspended possession order. The Income Management Team was unable to reach the tenant by phone or in person, and obtained a bailiff’s warrant. One of the Homelessness Prevention Officers visited, and left a letter asking for contact, to which the tenant responded.

The Homelessness Prevention Officer arranged to see the tenant at home and found that the tenant had been working with the CAB. The tenant thought that a payment plan was in place but was also burying her head in the sand about her debts. Together they completed a budgeting form to work out what tenant could afford to pay. The officer also contacted the children’s social worker for a letter of support, and spoke to the Income Management team who agreed that they would not contest the suspension of the warrant. At the court hearing, the judge suspended the warrant on terms. The officer also referred the tenant to the CAB for money advice to apply for a debt relief order for other debts. The tenant has since stuck to the order.

**Private rented housing**

Over the past five years, we have assisted 637 households into private rented accommodation and this has been a major success of our strategy.

At present, we can only make assumptions about the full impact of some of the reforms on the private rented sector. In 2011-12, we saw an increase in casework due to the ending of private tenancies. We know from anecdotal information that many of these tenancies ended as landlords were unhappy with the levels of LHA and felt they could let their properties at higher rents to tenants not in receipt of housing benefit.

So far, we have lost very few properties, but we do not know how many other landlords will be discouraged from making their properties available to benefit claimants. Landlords with more than one property have adapted so far, however if a benefit shortfall results in arrears then we will inevitably see a reduction in the availability of this type of accommodation for those in receipt of benefits.

We conducted a telephone survey about our Homes 4U service with a sample of our landlords that accept benefit claimants in January 2013.

There were high levels of satisfaction about the Homes 4U service, the helpfulness of staff and the information we provide about benefits. The majority of landlords felt that LHA rates were lower than the rates they could command for their properties. Issues with housing benefits were their biggest concern, particularly when tenants’ circumstances changed and this affected their benefit entitlement. They highlighted suspensions and backdating of benefits as a further concern.
The landlords were asked if there was any further help we could offer which might encourage them to consider benefit claimants in future. The main response was that they would like us to help to ensure the rent was paid and they would like help resolving benefit issues if they arose. Some landlords also expressed an interest in access to funding and grants on properties needing modernisation and repair.

We have a good relationship with local landlords and lettings agents and they have so far been very flexible and amenable to rent negotiations. They are however running businesses and we must recognise that we are competing for their properties with prospective tenants that are not on benefits.

It is vitally important that we maintain this good relationship with landlords and ensure they understand the benefit changes.

We need to consider what more we can do to support them and where we directly place tenants in private rented accommodation, maintain contact with them, and ensure that they are not left in an untenable position if a tenant loses benefit entitlement. We have their trust and we must continue to maintain this.

We aim to mitigate the effects of welfare reform on loss of private tenancies in various ways.

We are likely to have to offer landlords larger rent deposit guarantees and potentially more rent in advance in some cases, given that bad debts may increase. We currently have sufficient funding and reserves in place to continue to offer rent deposit bonds and loans for rent in advance. We will continue to review this annually.

We will continue to make use of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP), although we recognise that this only offers a relatively short-term solution and that demand for the available funding will increase.

We will carry out more robust affordability tests before placing families in private rented housing.

We also want to improve access to the current floating tenancy support service provided by Riverside ECHG. They took over the service in July 2011 after the Council decided not to tender for the new Supporting People contract. The service capacity reduced under the new contract, providing for an average caseload of 36 compared to 75 previously.

We have already commenced discussions with Riverside ECHG and they confirmed that they are willing to be as flexible as they can to help sustain private tenancies. Their ability to do so may change, as the contract will be subject to future funding reviews and competitive tendering within the next two years.

We also need to explore whether we can offer more help and support to landlords through our existing Homes 4U service. We would like to be able to help manage tenancy issues beyond what is available in the current market, at little or no cost to the landlord. Landlords taking advantage of our service will have to provide reasonable security of tenure for tenants placed by the Council. This may not be feasible within existing resources. Therefore we will need to consider the costs and benefits carefully and establish whether we can find savings in other parts of our service to fund this work.
Home ownership

Homeowners are not immune to homelessness and nationally there are an estimated 36,000 homeowners at risk of repossession annually.

Repossessions are increasing, although the number of households that seek help from our housing advice service is quite small.

Pre-court protocol
There is a voluntary pre-court protocol in place, promoted by the Council for Mortgage Lenders, and most banks and building societies abide by this; secondary lenders with charges against a property are less likely to do so.

The government has taken steps to help homeowners facing repossession action in other ways.

DCLG grant to prevent mortgage repossessions.
We received a DCLG grant of £48,500 in 2012 to help prevent repossessions. This was split into two parts:

- £30,000 for cash payments or small interest free loans of up to £5,000 where this might prevent repossession
- £18,500 to support housing court helpdesk services at Guildford County Court.

Although we have promoted the availability of the grants and loans through the Citizens’ Advice Bureaux to date there have been no cases that meet the criteria. This has been the case elsewhere and DCLG have recently relaxed their original criteria as long as the funding is used to prevent repossessions in some way.

Woking CAB have co-ordinated a housing help desk service for 13 years at Guildford County Court, working in partnership with both Guildford and Waverley CABs. We gave them the additional DCLG court desk funding and this has meant they have been able to increase their capacity to deliver this service for a year until October 2013.

In the six-month period October 2012 to March 2013, the court desk dealt with 82 cases of which 20 were from Guildford. They prevented homelessness in almost half of these cases and delayed homelessness in just over a third. They also helped clients suspend court proceedings, helped clients to improve and stabilise their financial situation by helping them claim benefits they were entitled to, and provided money and debt advice.

A new Community Legal Services (CLS) contract for housing court desk work has been let to Surrey Law Centre (SLC) from April 2013, creating some duplication of service. The Community Legal Services Commission has also made additional funding for court desk services available and let a new contract to Surrey Law Centre from April 2013. There was no prior consultation with existing service providers about how the new arrangements would work. We are working with colleagues from the CAB, neighbouring Councils and SLC to manage these changes and ensure there remains effective access to people facing repossession of their homes.
We do not think there will be sufficient capacity to meet the need for this work through the CLS contract alone, which has restrictions about those who can be helped, therefore we will explore how the two services might complement each other to maximise the support available to those facing repossession.

The Mortgage Rescue Scheme
There are two versions of this scheme available to people whose home is under threat of repossession. The scheme is very complicated and involves detailed financial assessments linked to the homeowner and the property. It can only help in a small number of cases.

**Shared equity:** Housing associations can provide a loan to reduce monthly mortgage payments. A low monthly interest-only charge is payable on the loan, which is secured against the home.

**Government mortgage to rent:** A housing association buys the home for 90 per cent of its market value and the former owner becomes the housing association’s tenant, paying a rent that is 20 per cent less than the market level for the area.

Since the scheme’s launch in early 2009, the Council has helped two families to retain their accommodation through this scheme (both mortgage to rent). Two further cases are nearing completion, one of which involves an equity loan.

**CASE STUDY – MORTGAGE RESCUE**
A mother and her severely disabled 16-year-old child were unable to pay the mortgage on their Guildford flat, following a relationship breakdown. The flat had been adapted for the child’s needs, including an accessible shower room.

Following a full appraisal of the situation by the Council and CAB, Thames Valley Housing Association is about to complete the purchase of the home under the Government’s Mortgage Rescue Scheme. The mother will become a Thames Valley HA tenant. This will avoid a disruptive move for the family that could have been costly both to them and to the public purse.

**Low cost home ownership options**
The Council owns the freehold of a number of shared ownership properties. Our allocation scheme for low cost housing gives priority for any households that have become homeless but may have capital and an income to afford this option. We will also permit staircasing down (selling back a share of the property to the Council) in some circumstances.

We have also repurchased a small number of properties from leaseholders who have been unable to meet their mortgage obligations. In one case, the leaseholder had fallen seriously ill, and we converted their property to a Council rented house that enabled them to continue living in their home. In such cases, we assess the circumstances which led to the leaseholder’s situation, as well as the long-term financial viability of repurchasing the property, alongside the likely cost of assisting the leaseholder in the event that they became homeless.

**Emergency and Temporary accommodation**
We have a duty to provide interim (emergency) and temporary accommodation for households in priority need who have nowhere else to go. Interim accommodation must be
available until we have made a decision about their homeless application. Our enquiries may take some time. We are expected to reach a decision within 33 working days, however this is not always possible in complex cases.

If, on completion of our inquiries, we accept that the household meets the statutory homeless criteria we are required to provide temporary (rather than interim) accommodation until such time as we can offer them permanent\(^{20}\) (long-term) housing which will discharge our duty.

Long-term housing is normally expected to be social rented housing. The Localism Act introduced the option for councils to use the private rented sector in meeting their statutory duty to homeless households without first seeking the household’s agreement. We have found that households have been willing to take up private rented housing so this has not been a particular issue other than in a small number of cases.

We are required to ensure that any accommodation we offer a homeless household under our statutory duties is suitable. The Government have reinforced this message through regulations. This was partly in response to the London boroughs seeking to house families in other parts of the country where housing was cheaper.

Given the likely impact of welfare reforms, affordability is likely to be the overriding factor when offering any property as a discharge of our homelessness duties. This will apply also to temporary accommodation.

We are fortunate that our use of emergency and temporary accommodation is limited but it is increasing.

We only use bed and breakfast accommodation (B&B) as a last resort. Unfortunately, this is often the only option we have if a household presents at our office or contacts us that day. We cannot always access accommodation locally and there is competition from other councils for the available spaces. For example, recently we could only secure accommodation in Hertfordshire for a family with four children at a cost of £120 per night\(^{21}\).

From the trends, it is clear we will continue to need to use B&B accommodation and find more temporary accommodation.

When we had high numbers of households in temporary accommodation, many were living in general needs flats or houses on temporary tenancies. We also had a number of blocks of flats that we used for this purpose. When homelessness reduced, we no longer needed this type of provision and disposed of, or changed the use of, the accommodation. As we did not want to hold vacant properties we leased some of these flats to Rosebery Housing Association (as outlined in chapter 3), retaining the ability to use them as temporary accommodation if needed. We are now finding that this is not sufficient and we are beginning to use some of our general needs stock to supplement this. This included some properties at Gomshall and Lakeside Close that were awaiting demolition but this option is no longer available.

\(^{20}\) Permanent housing is now considered to be accommodation that offers security of tenure for at least two years.

\(^{21}\) It is possible to claim housing benefit towards some of these costs up to the LHA rate. This may not be possible in the future.
We need to investigate options to increase the availability of suitable emergency and temporary accommodation and may need to invest funding into the future provision of such housing. There may be scope to work with other councils and Registered Providers to achieve this.
### ACTION PLAN 3 – Sustaining and creating access to accommodation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Action number</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Target Date</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>3 A-1</td>
<td>Monitor trends in house prices and rents. In particular assess levels of Affordable Rent and if tenants can meet the rent levels set.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services,</td>
<td>March 2014 and ongoing</td>
<td>Monitoring in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supply</td>
<td>3 B-1</td>
<td>Review and progress development plan to provide new homes.</td>
<td>Neighbourhood and Housing Management Services, Housing Advice Services</td>
<td>September 2013</td>
<td>New homes available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 B-2</td>
<td>Work in partnership to bring empty properties back into use and increase accommodation options.</td>
<td>Private Sector Services, Housing Advice Services, landlords.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 B-3</td>
<td>Investigate loans to owners of empty properties to bring them back into use as temporary accommodation or move-on from temporary accommodation.</td>
<td>Private Sector Services, Housing Advice Services, partner housing associations</td>
<td>September 2013</td>
<td>Review completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social housing</td>
<td>3 C-1</td>
<td>Review housing allocations scheme in light of flexibilities offered by the Localism Act</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services.</td>
<td>July 2014</td>
<td>Review completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 C-2</td>
<td>Review the use of existing stock, assess levels of under occupation.</td>
<td>Neighbourhood and Housing Management Services, Housing Advice Services</td>
<td>September 2013</td>
<td>Review completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 C-3</td>
<td>Introduce changes that will enable people to downsize more easily.</td>
<td>Neighbourhood and Housing Management Services, Housing Advice Services</td>
<td>May 2013</td>
<td>Decrease in under occupation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 C-4</td>
<td>Promote mutual exchanges – Pilot Homeswap ‘speed matching events’.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services, Registered Providers</td>
<td>March 2014</td>
<td>Events set up and success evaluated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 C-5</td>
<td>Promote transfer opportunities through new post offering practical advice and help to move.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services</td>
<td>July 2013</td>
<td>Increase in number of tenants that downsize and reduction of under occupied households.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 C-6</td>
<td>Review approach to tackling social housing fraud.</td>
<td>Housing Advice, Revenues and Payments, Neighbourhood and Housing Management, Registered providers</td>
<td>June 2014</td>
<td>Target of 10 properties brought back into use through fraud investigation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Private rented housing**

| 3 D-1 | Review Homes 4U in partnership with the Landlords forum | Housing Advice Services | Ongoing (via 6-monthly meetings) | Review completed |
| 3 D-2 | Investigate range of incentive schemes for Private Sector Landlords including minor repairs service for single property landlords. | Housing Advice Services | Ongoing | Incentives identified. |
| 3 D-3 | Consult with landlords regularly and help address rents and benefits issues. | Housing Advice Services, Revenues and Payments | Ongoing | |

**Owner-Occupation**

<p>| 3 E-1 | Prevent repossessions through joint work with court desk service. | Housing Advice Services, CABX, SLC | Ongoing | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 E-2</th>
<th>Promote mortgage rescue scheme.</th>
<th>Housing Advice Services, CABX, TVHA</th>
<th>April 2014</th>
<th>At least one successful referral (as funding is very limited for this scheme)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>3 F-1</td>
<td>Continue to prioritise funding for the Sanctuary scheme and explore opportunities for partnership funding to expand the service.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services</td>
<td>March 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 F-2</td>
<td>Review the Riverside Floating Support Service annually.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services</td>
<td>March 2014 then annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency and Temporary housing</td>
<td>3 G-1</td>
<td>Explore opportunities to create short-term emergency accommodation in partnership with other local authorities.</td>
<td>Housing Advice and other borough and district councils</td>
<td>March 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 G-2</td>
<td>Ensure any emergency B&amp;B meets minimum standards.</td>
<td>Housing Advice and other borough and district councils.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6 Tackling rough sleeping and single homelessness

Single People

Single homelessness and rough sleeping is often a hidden issue in our community. Single people under 60 are the largest group on the housing register making up 46 per cent of those seeking social housing.

Sofa surfing is a common practice but there are few, if any figures that indicate the extent of the problem. Our housing register shows that 161 single people under 60 said they were of no fixed abode and 52 said they were living with friends; some 15 per cent of applicants. Many of this group will be moving around from place to place, having very insecure housing arrangements.

The HOST team found that 125 of their clients in 2012-13 were sofa surfing (figure taken from snapshot data gathered on the last day of every month).

Single people are not normally considered a priority if they become homeless unless they are especially vulnerable, although this is not a guarantee that they will qualify for help. Those who have been involved in anti-social behaviour, violence or offending and those previously evicted from accommodation are likely to be classed as intentionally homeless and, as a result, may be excluded or unable to access housing. This often leads to rough sleeping.

Young People

Stakeholders consulted about the strategy raised concern about youth homelessness. Services say they are seeing younger people approaching them for help and the trends in rough sleeping do show a reduction in age.

Our housing advice service deals with many people under 21, single people, couples and families. Nine percent of housing applicants were under 21 at the end of March 2013, 41 of them were aged 16 or 17 and 245 were aged 18-20. The majority (78 per cent) were single. There is no significant trend in these numbers over the last three years and our housing options figures set out in chapter two also indicate that the figures are similar.

There has however been a reduction in 16 and 17 year olds approaching for help as homeless. The new arrangements with the YSS clearly making a difference and hopefully this will continue to be the case. We also work closely with Children’s Services to help care leavers.

Young people that do become homeless can be very difficult to house, particularly if they have complex support needs or challenging behaviour.

As part of the new arrangement with the YSS, there are a number of emergency and assessment beds available to avoid the need to place a young person in B&B. Area panels have been set up to consider housing placements for young people.

There is a protocol in place to facilitate joint working with homeless 16 and 17 year olds and care leavers. This is being reviewed now the new arrangements are in place.
The supply of accommodation for young people is limited, and many areas of Surrey have hardly any. Therefore there is increasing demand for access to services in Guildford, particularly to the Y centre and Mulberry House. We have nomination arrangements in place with these services and co-operate with out-of-area placements but seek to ensure that there are move-on plans agreed as part of the agreement.

The SP funding for the supported housing provided for young people in Surrey has been transferred to the Children’s Services commissioning team and they plan to review the current funding for arrangements over the next few months. We have been invited to participate as part of this review and will seek to ensure that the needs of local services and the value they provide are recognised.

We will work with Surrey County Council Children’s and Youth Support Services together with our supported housing providers to continue to address any issues that arise affecting young people.

**Rough Sleepers**

Chapter 2 set out the profile of rough sleeping in the borough. We have invested in rough sleeping services for a number of years and this remains a priority area of our work. The HOST service is successful in helping to prevent rough sleeping, and joint work with the town centre hostels and Guildford Action drop-in centre contributes to this success.

There are many challenges in working with rough sleepers.

**Access to hostel accommodation**

Due to cuts to Supporting People funding and other specialist agencies raising their eligibility criteria, hostels have advised that they cannot deal with the complexity of some cases. They have also identified a need for more move-on options to free up additional vacancies in their schemes.

This makes it difficult to place complex cases as hostels are stretched too far.

**Assessment beds**

There are three assessment beds in the borough. These are beds within existing hostels or supported housing projects, set aside for clients with complex needs who require additional support and time to assess their longer-term needs.

There are two beds in Cyrenian House, and one in Vaughan House. The maximum stay in these beds is six months. HOST nominate clients for these beds and continue to provide support to them alongside the supported housing provider. This allows clients whose needs are not straightforward to receive extra support. It has so far proved very successful.

There is a need for more assessment beds in the borough.

**Influx of homeless people from outside the borough**

Statutory agencies from outside the area send people to the borough or try to refer them to HOST. This is common just prior to release from prison. Clients are encouraged to stay, and it is very difficult to get move-on accommodation arranged by other agencies after an initial stay in night shelters. Clients with no connection to the borough cannot access
hostels, so they are then likely to be left rough sleeping if they refuse to return to their home area, particularly as there may be no offer of accommodation from that council.

This practice arises because other areas restrict access to accommodation through allocation policies, and we need to work with the hostels to notify agencies of their responsibility.

This is likely to be an increasing problem as local councils take advantage of the Localism Act to vary their allocation policies as most are increasing the categories of applicant that they will exclude. This will mean that many rough sleepers will cease to be eligible to join the housing register in the area where they have local connections, for example, if they move away for a short time or their past behaviour has been poor.

We will need to monitor this carefully and work with neighbouring councils to address this.

We also need to review the options available to the increasing numbers of Eastern European and non UK rough sleepers arriving in the borough considering forthcoming changes to membership of the EU and lifting of current restrictions. This will be achieved by considering best practice and reconnection options in conjunction with the UK Border Agency for rough sleepers from Eastern Europe and non UK citizens.

No Second Night Out (NSNO)
No Second Night Out was introduced in London in April 2011 as part of the Mayor of London’s strategy to tackle rough sleeping in the capital. It provides a rapid intervention in the central London boroughs to ensure new rough sleepers access services quickly and do not spend a second night on the streets.

Under this model, new rough sleepers are referred to a 24 hour Hub, where their needs are assessed and where they are made a ‘single service offer’, in many cases involving reconnection to a home area. All rough sleeping services are signed up to the NSNO principles and the single service offer is the only offer available to new rough sleepers even where they chose not to take it up.

A number of other cities have taken up this model with some success, although there is some dislike of the title of the initiative, because it is an aspiration which may not always be achievable, even in areas with a wide range of services and resources.

DCLG suggest that for NSNO to work outside London the following should be in place:

- early intervention
- single service offer
- consistent message across services
- mechanisms to identify new rough sleepers
- effective reconnections

HOST already work to the broad principles of NSNO and some of these mechanisms are in place, but not all agencies support the single service offer. We are however working to address this both locally and across the county and are receiving support from Homeless Link.
The Surrey Homeless Alliance

DCLG have recognised that single homeless people need additional support. They provided funding in 2012 to groups of councils to improve access to services. As advised in Chapter 2 we were asked to lead and co-ordinate the Surrey councils to develop an action plan to help prevent single homelessness. We received a £272,000 grant to support this work and implement the plan.

The boroughs and districts together with a number of voluntary sector providers are now progressing this work as the Surrey Homeless Alliance.

The plan addresses a number of areas and will provide:

- on line housing options advice
- better access to rent deposit bonds for single people
- better information about vacancies in supported accommodation
- additional shared houses for single people
- additional help for people sleeping rough including
  - a local ‘no second night out’ model for the country
  - an annual plan for Severe Weather Emergency Provision.

The Surrey Homeless Alliance action plan is in appendix 1.

The action plan will complement this strategy.

CASE STUDY: S

S was an 18 year old who had been evicted from several local hostels and was on the brink of being evicted again. He was likely to sleep rough if alternative accommodation was not found.

S had a history of low level offending and hostel staff recognised that he was vulnerable to abuse from other clients. However, because he did not appear willing to engage, the hostels felt that they could not support him.

HOST moved him immediately into an assessment bed in Cyrenian House. Staff quickly realised that S had higher support needs than previously thought and in particular it became clear that he had learning difficulties, an inability to budget and an inability to retain information or learn from mistakes.

HOST referred him to the Social Care Team and agreed a care package.
It took a long period of time to get the package of care agreed and during that time, S was given legal highs by another client, persuaded to be a guarantor for several payday loans for other clients and had his food and possessions stolen.

It was necessary to support S every step of the way from collecting his benefits with him to ensure he paid his rent, to splitting his food into daily bags and only releasing them as required. All this support is not necessarily within HOST’s remit but was deemed essential in order to help him to sustain his accommodation and also to support the hostel staff.

Eventually S was awarded a £670 per week care package, consisting of 35 hours of visiting support. S moved into an appropriate move-on flat.

This case highlights that HOST can provide a very client-specific service and succeed where other services have not had sufficient resources.

CASE STUDY: D

Client D was referred to HOST by Royal Surrey County Hospital.

The client had spent a week in the care of RSCH and HOST were notified at the point of discharge that the patient would be discharged ‘No Fixed Abode’ on a Friday afternoon.

Despite the short notice, HOST attended the hospital that day to see the client who had been moved to the ‘discharge lounge’ after being declared medically fit to leave.

HOST gathered information in relation to the client’s needs and housing history.

This became very complicated as the client was claiming a connection to the borough through previous residence with his ex-partner. However he was no longer resident at the privately owned home and had been living out of the country for some time seeking employment overseas.

As an interim measure HOST contacted the ex partner to establish if the client was able to return there, even if only temporarily. They found that he had no legal rights to the property and additionally a disclosure was made related to previous risk issues at the home that would make returning there inappropriate.

The local night shelter was full and there were no other spaces available to accommodate the client. HOST assisted D to contact local friends who provided an interim solution over the weekend until the next available bed in the night shelter could be secured on Monday.

From this point HOST were able to assist the client to register with the local authority. This included some practical assistance as well as helping the client to obtain copies of key documentation. HOST used welfare funds donated by local charities to them to assist D in paying for this.

HOST worked with D to establish his most appropriate housing options and all felt that this would be private rented accommodation. HOST referred D to the local Home Plus service\(^{22}\) that would offer a rent deposit in the form of a bond. As D was unable to access funds for rent in advance HOST were able to allocate a sum of money from their welfare fund to secure the move to private rented accommodation.

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\(^{22}\) The rent deposit scheme for single people provided by Stonham and funded by Crisis.
CASE STUDY: G

Guildford Action contacted HOST about client G who had attended their drop-in service. He was previously unknown to both services. The client advised that he was rough sleeping in the cold weather. As the Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) was operating a space was offered to G.

HOST assessed G at SWEP and found out he was from Dorset and had travelled to Guildford because he had been here many years ago. G was confused and unclear about his history, however he did disclose that he had spent some time sectioned under the mental health act and claimed that he had discharged himself very recently.

HOST contacted the hospital, as they were concerned that G may be absent without leave rather than discharged but were unable to proceed until G had provided his written consent. When he did so, this was faxed to them. HOST then waited until the next day to get the information and in the meantime, G had a quiet night in the SWEP bed at Number Five.

The hospital disclosed that G had a significant history of poor mental health with a number of occasions when he had been detained under various sections of the mental health act. Additional to this there were some concerns around previous offending history including sex offences and significant issues around alcohol dependency and the subsequent impacts of this in relation to both his physical and mental health as well as housing.

HOST advised the night shelter of the identified risks around G.

HOST discovered that G had previously been housed by a housing association, so they explored his local connection to the area of the property. G was unable to provide information and subsequently investigations to local authorities and housing providers followed.

Once HOST gathered all the required information, they talked to G about returning to his home area. He was amenable to this so HOST made the necessary arrangements for him to do so. G was a risk given his mental health and offending history so HOST felt it appropriate to notify the police of his impending travel and return arrangements. They also contacted the mental health services that had been dealing with the client and notified them in advance.

Client G was given a travel warrant and was reconnected to his local authority area successfully after a four-night stay in Guildford.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Action number</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Target Date</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Homelessness</td>
<td>4 A-1</td>
<td>Implement the Surrey Homelessness Alliance Action plan, including increased access to rent deposit bonds.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services, Surrey local authorities</td>
<td>March 2014</td>
<td>As per plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 A-2</td>
<td>Work with providers to ensure effective access and move-on arrangements from hostels and supported housing.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 A-3</td>
<td>Continue to support hostel providers and other homelessness service providers to develop via Hostel Providers Liaison Group (HPLG), HPLG training sub group, hostel visits, Housing Advice Services open mornings etc.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services, hostel providers and managers</td>
<td>Ongoing (March 2014)</td>
<td>Meeting and training dates agreed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 A-4</td>
<td>Review existing pre-tenancy training/tenancy ready work with the aim of implementing agreed standards for single homeless.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services, Hostel Providers</td>
<td>March 2014</td>
<td>Set up sessions at Guildford, Woking, night shelters and drop-in centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 A-5</td>
<td>Investigate the options to increase the number of assessment beds for rough sleepers.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services, Hostel Providers</td>
<td>April 2014</td>
<td>Options identified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young People</td>
<td>4 B-1</td>
<td>Work with the YSS to ensure that homeless young people access appropriate services.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services, Youth Support Service</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Attendance and contribution to homelessness young persons panels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 B-2</td>
<td>Monitor the effectiveness of the housing protocol for homeless 16/17 year olds and care leavers.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services, Surrey authorities, YSS, CS</td>
<td>September 2013</td>
<td>Feedback from Surrey Housing Needs Managers and YSS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rough Sleeping</td>
<td>4 C-1</td>
<td>Support and monitor the work of HOST to minimise rough sleeping.</td>
<td>HOST and Registered</td>
<td>Monthly, quarterly and</td>
<td>Contract targets met. Service adapted to meet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 C-2</td>
<td>Seek ongoing funding to commission the HOST service from April 2015.</td>
<td>RPs</td>
<td>March 2014</td>
<td>Continued HOST funding secured.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 C-3</td>
<td>Review the effectiveness of the present rough Sleeper Action group (RSAG) and involvement of partners</td>
<td>HOST</td>
<td>Sept 2013</td>
<td>RSAG is effective partnership offering solutions for rough sleepers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 C-4</td>
<td>Consult with stakeholders annually to assess the work of HOST.</td>
<td>RPs</td>
<td>Annually, starting March 2014</td>
<td>Stakeholder feedback contributes to service improvement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 C-5</td>
<td>Develop an effective local alternative to the No Second Night Out model of working with new rough sleepers.</td>
<td>Surrey local authorities, hostel providers</td>
<td>Sept 2013</td>
<td>Service reviewed and monitored.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 C-6</td>
<td>Ensure that Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) is reviewed annually and that arrangements are agreed with partner agencies.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services, HOST, other voluntary agencies</td>
<td>Protocol reviewed annually. Review by October and subsequently every April</td>
<td>Arrangements agreed and publicised appropriately.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 C-7</td>
<td>Review best practice regarding Eastern European and non UK citizens in conjunction with UKBA.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services, HOST UK Borders Agency</td>
<td>October 2013</td>
<td>Processes reviewed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 C-8</td>
<td>In partnership with local agencies develop a diversionary giving scheme to inform the public of alternative ways to help homeless people and discourage begging.</td>
<td>Housing Advice Services, other homelessness service providers</td>
<td>September 2013</td>
<td>Diversionary scheme in operation. Begging reduced.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Monitoring
We will update the action plan quarterly, and the strategy as a whole will be reviewed on an annual basis. In particular, we will review the strategy when we produce a new Housing Strategy.

8. Conclusion

The next five years will be very challenging given the changes we face. The prospect of economic recovery and the impact of welfare reform are uncertain. In the short to medium term access to housing will be difficult for those on the lowest incomes whether they are in work or on full benefit. Homelessness is likely to increase accordingly.

We are committed to preventing and minimising homelessness in the borough. We cannot guarantee that we can resource all that we might wish to do. We will base our decisions on our agreed priorities and we will make the best use of the resources available.

The delivery of high quality services will be essential and we will seek to achieve the Gold Standard by meeting the Government’s ten local challenges.

If we are to be successful in preventing homelessness, it will require imagination, innovation and resilience and most importantly the help and support from our partners and others across the voluntary and community sector.

The socio-economic consequences arising from an increase in homelessness are significant. The impact of homelessness affects people and communities and is costly to the public sector. This strategy will therefore provide the framework to minimise the impact of homelessness within the borough and make a real difference to the lives of people in our community.

Further Information:

For more information please contact Housing Advice Services on 01483 444244

9. Appendices
- Appendix 1 - Surrey Homelessness Alliance Action Plan
- Appendix 2 - Glossary
Appendix 1

Surrey Homeless Alliance Action plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task 1</th>
<th>Launch a countywide branding known as Surrey Homeless Alliance, adopting common posters, leaflets and information to advertise and raise awareness of homelessness services in Surrey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Key Objectives | • To promote a Surrey-wide strategic commitment and common approach to tackling homelessness.  
• To avoid a wrong door policy meaning clients can approach one agency to receive comprehensive advice and support.  
• To launch an alliance with effective branding and marketing tools.  
• To produce one-stop comprehensive information about all homeless services available in Surrey.  
• To ensure that homeless services are appropriately marketed and signposted.  
• To share good practice amongst homelessness professionals in Surrey.  
• To agree and implement an operational guideline for collecting and sharing homelessness information.  
• To reduce costs for individual agencies in producing and promoting their services. |
| Lead Authority | Guildford Borough Council |
| Key Partners | Surrey Housing Authorities  
Homeless Link  
RentStarts, Next Step and Stonham (HomePlus)  
Voluntary, religious and charitable organisations |
<p>| Resources | £2,500 |
| Completion date | 30 September 2013 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Task 2</strong></th>
<th>Deliver a web-based Housing Options and Advice Assessment Service (Housing Options Wizard)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Key Objectives** | • To provide online access to housing options information and advice 24 hours a day, every day of the year.  
• To provide early intervention and prevention advice to all client groups in housing need.  
• To avoid a wrong door policy meaning clients can approach one agency to receive comprehensive advice and support.  
• To provide written housing options and advice to a wide variety of service users including all client groups in housing need, housing and homelessness workers, voluntary and charitable agencies, health, police and probation, education and welfare staff.  
• To offer an immediate housing options and advice response that shows the service user which agency, if any, they should approach for further assistance.  
• To improve and enhance front-line Housing Options and Advice service provision across Surrey by establishing relevant information about the service user ahead of an appointment or to have provided adequate advice to others without the need for an appointment.  
• To allow other agencies and front-line workers to provide housing options and advice without the need to refer to the local authority.  
• To provide a more consistent and accurate approach to housing options information and advice for all service users.  
• To support the work of the newly formed Surrey-wide alliance in adopting a common and consistent approach to tackling homelessness. |
| **Lead Authority** | Waverley Borough Council |
| **Key Partners** | Surrey Housing Authorities  
Abritas and Locata  
Citizens’ Advice Bureaux and voluntary agencies |
<p>| <strong>Resources</strong> | £45,000 |
| <strong>Completion date</strong> | Jun 2013 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task 3</th>
<th>Standardise and enhance existing rent deposit scheme operation across Surrey for both priority and non-priority households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Key Objectives** | • To promote a Surrey-wide common approach to rent deposit scheme operation.  
• To create and maintain better working relationships with the private sector.  
• To simplify the process for landlords, agents and applicants across Surrey.  
• To utilise the CLG PRS Toolkit in determining the best rent deposit scheme model for Surrey.  
• To share and adopt successful aspects of rent deposit and discard aspects that do not work well.  
• To ensure support for budgeting, tenancy sustainment and other support is available where needed.  
• To share a comprehensive policy, procedure and operational paperwork where relevant.  
• To adopt a common formula to calculate deposit, bond and landlord incentive amounts where possible.  
• To reduce costs for individual local authorities in promoting and delivering their services.  
• To implement stricter financial control and monitoring to ensure deposits and bonds are recycled.  
• To encourage and support cross-boundary or out of area moves where appropriate.  
• To encourage a minimum of 10% additional lets from the private sector across Surrey within two years.  
• To support and enhance the new non-priority household rent deposit scheme.  
• To maximise the use of DHP.  
• To minimise the impact of Welfare Reform Act on private sector housing supply and applicants in receipt of housing benefit. |
| **Lead Authority** | Tandridge District Council |
| **Key Partners** | Surrey Housing Authorities  
Consultancy support  
RentStarts, Next Step and Stonham (HomePlus) |
| **Resources** | £4,000 |
| **Completion date** | 30 June 2013 |
### Task 4

**Develop and implement a Surrey-wide rent deposit scheme for Non-Priority Single Households**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Objectives</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To promote a Surrey-wide common approach to rent deposit assistance for non priority households.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To achieve a baseline minimum or single service offer for non-priority single households.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To support the NSNO model to be developed in Surrey.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To utilise the CLG PRS Toolkit in determining the best rent deposit scheme model for Surrey.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To create and maintain better working relationships with the private sector.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To simplify the process for landlords, agents and applicants across Surrey.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To ensure support for budgeting, tenancy sustainment and other support is available where needed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To share a comprehensive policy, procedure and operational paperwork where relevant.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To adopt a common formula to calculate deposit, bond and landlord incentive amounts where possible.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To reduce costs for individual local authorities in promoting and delivering their services.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To provide 20 bonds/deposits per authority per year for non priority households within two years.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To implement stricter financial control and monitoring to ensure deposits and bonds are recycled.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To provide up to 50 additional bonds/deposits after Mar 2014 using legacy generated savings from the scheme.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To encourage and support cross-boundary or out of area moves where appropriate, including MAPPA and IH single households.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To support and enhance the county's main rent deposit schemes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To maximise the use of DHP.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To minimise the impact of Welfare Reform Act on private sector housing supply and applicants in receipt of housing benefit.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To support grant bids by homelessness charities in Surrey for Crisis PRS Access Development Programme funding (Round 3).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lead Authority**  Mole Valley District Council  
**Key Partners**  Surrey housing authorities  RentStarts, Next Step and Stonham (HomePlus)  
**Resources**  £240,000  
**Completion date**  June 2013
### Task 5
**Supported accommodation database to improve access / pathway to supported and other accommodation for young people - to be extended to other client groups**

| Key Objectives | • To provide an online directory of all accommodation based services which can be accessed by professionals.  
• To provide real time vacancy information which is updated by providers so that professionals can search for accommodation by client group and age.  
• To ensure professionals working with all client groups have the same access to information. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lead Authority</td>
<td>Woking Borough Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Manager</td>
<td>Catherine Butler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Lead Officer</td>
<td>Debbie Aitken (Surrey CC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Group</td>
<td>Peter Floyd (Surrey CC) and others as required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Key Partners | Surrey Housing Authorities  
Surrey County Council Children’s Services  
Youth Support Service  
SP/SH providers | |
| Resources | £11,000                                                                                                                                       |
| Completion date | June 2013                                                                                                                                   |

### Task 6
**Increase Existing Supply of Shared Accommodation across Surrey**

| Key Objectives | • To identify and provide additional properties for use as shared accommodation.  
• To encourage and support move-on protocols with hostels and supported housing schemes.  
• To minimise the impact of welfare reform changes for under 35 non-priority single households.  
• To support and work with the Empty Homes programmes within Surrey.  
• To create and maintain effective relationships with the private sector.  
• To provide alternative use of accommodation for housing benefit landlords with 5+ bedroom houses. |
<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lead Authority</td>
<td>Elmbridge Borough Council</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Key Partners | Surrey Housing Authorities  
Surrey County Council Supporting People Team, Local RPs | |
| Resources | £50,000                                                                                                                                       |
| Completion date | March 2014                                                                                                                                   |
### Task 7: Co-ordinate and Enhance Existing Provision for Rough Sleepers

#### Key Objectives
- To agree and adopt broad principles of a No Second Night Out model that best reflects Surrey’s needs.
- To agree and adopt a Surrey-wide county SWEP Action Plan.
- To raise awareness of and promote the principles of No Second Night Out with front-line housing staff, other relevant Council departments, homelessness agencies, voluntary and charitable agencies.
- To achieve a baseline minimum or single service offer for non-priority single households.
- To agree and implement a county-wide response to the national rough sleepers reporting line.
- To create a personalised budget provision for rough sleepers via a central Surrey charity.
- To identify potential emergency or crash-pad bed space provision via existing hostels, church and charitable organizations.
- To support grant bids by homelessness charities in Surrey for Homeless Transition Funding.

#### Lead Authority
- Guildford Borough Council

#### Key Partners
- Surrey Housing Authorities
- Homeless Link
- Surrey County Council Supporting People team
- Surrey Adult Social Care
- PCT
- DAAT
- Voluntary, religious and charitable organisations

#### Resources
- £12,000

#### Completion date
- April 2013
Appendix 2 – Glossary

**Affordable housing**
Affordable housing is subsidised housing provided at below market rates, and includes social rented, shared ownership, intermediate housing, and Affordable Rent. It is provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Affordable housing should be available at a cost low enough for eligible households to afford determined with regard to local income and house prices.

**Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST)**
This is the most common form of tenancy in the private sector. Assured Shorthold Tenancies give the tenant the right to occupy a property for a fixed period of time, provided that they keep to the terms of their Tenancy Agreement. At the end of the fixed period,(often 12 months), the landlord or the tenant has the right to terminate the tenancy.

**Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)**
The government department in England responsible for setting policy on supporting local government, communities and neighbourhoods, regeneration, housing, planning, building and the environment, and fire.

**Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)**
The government department in England responsible for setting policy on welfare benefits, pensions and employment.

**DAAT**
The Surrey Drug and Alcohol Action Team

**Discretionary Housing Payment**
Discretionary Housing Payments are not payments of benefit but extra payments made in addition to Housing or Council Tax Benefit at the discretion of the Council where it is felt that extra help with housing costs is needed.

**Homelessness acceptances**
Applications from people applying to the Council as homeless under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 that have been accepted. Councils have a statutory duty to make an offer of permanent accommodation to people accepted as homeless.

**Homelessness duties**
The statutory duties on a local authority to ensure advice and assistance is provided to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and eligible for assistance under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.

**Homelessness preventions**
The number of households prevented from homelessness through advice or assistance from the Housing Options service.
**Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)**
The national housing and regeneration delivery agency for England, which aims to contribute to economic growth by enabling communities to deliver high-quality housing that people can afford. The HCA provides grant funding for Registered Providers to build new affordable housing.

**HOST**
The Homeless Outreach and Support Team (HOST) is run by Stonham (part of Home Group), and works with rough sleepers in the borough, helping people into appropriate accommodation, and working with them to sustain their tenancies.

**Housing Allocations Scheme**
The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, requires the Council, under part 6, to have a published Housing Allocations Scheme which sets out how it will prioritise those households seeking social housing.

**Housing Need**
Housing need is defined as the number of households who lack their own housing or live in unsuitable housing and who cannot afford to meet their needs in the market.

**Housing Register**
The housing register is a list of all individuals or households who have applied to the Council for affordable housing and met the criteria set out in the housing allocations scheme.

**HPLG**
Hostel Providers Liaison Group

**Indefinite leave to remain**
Indefinite leave to remain (often known as 'ILR' and ‘settlement’) is permission to remain in the UK without any time restrictions on the length of stay. It is not the same as naturalisation as a British citizen and may, in specific circumstances, be ceased or invalidated, for example, if a fraudulent application is uncovered, if the person resides outside of the UK for more than two years or as a result of a criminal conviction that results in a Deportation Order coming into force.

**Intermediate housing**
Housing at prices or rents above those of social rent but below market prices or rents. Intermediate housing can include shared equity products (for example Homebuy), other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent which is usually around 80 per cent of market rents.

**Introductory tenancy**
A 12 month probationary tenancy after which tenants are granted a longer tenancy (usually five years) provided they meet the conditions of their tenancy agreement.
Long term empty properties
Residential properties that have remained unoccupied for at least six months and are not in the categories exempt from the status.

LSP
The Guildford Local Strategic Partnership.

MARAC
Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) to share information about households where there is domestic abuse and to help manage the risks jointly between all relevant agencies in the statutory and voluntary sector.

MAPPA
Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), put in place to manage dangerous offenders.

Mutual Exchange
When two (or more) secure or assured tenants swap tenancies (and homes) with each other.

Overcrowding
An overcrowded dwelling is one that is below the bedroom standard.

Reasonable preference categories
The categories under which households are given preference for housing under the housing allocations scheme as set out under part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.

Registered Provider (RP)
Providers of affordable housing (including housing associations, and the Council) which are registered with the Homes and Communities Agency. Housing associations were formerly known as Registered Social Landlords (RSLs).

RIE
Rapid Improvement Event. An event held over a short period of time, usually a week that involves all relevant parties with the intention of reaching agreement on how to change the service for the better by the end of the event. For example, the review of the service for homeless 16 and 17 year olds.

SAdAS
Surrey Addiction and Drug Advisory Service

Social rented housing
Rented housing owned by local authorities and Registered Providers for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime.
Supporting People
A government scheme that aims to support people in their own homes so that they can lead more independent lives. In Surrey, the Supporting People funding is administered by Surrey County Council through contractual arrangements with service providers.

SWEP
Severe Weather Emergency Provision. Arrangements to ensure that no one has to sleep rough when temperatures are predicted to be zero degrees or below for three or more consecutive nights in accordance with government guidelines. When conditions are met any rough sleepers including people with no recourse to public funds, and others who may not normally be eligible for help, will be offered a bed for the night.

Tenure
The financial arrangements under which someone has the right to live in a house or flat, for example owner-occupation, private rental (in which rent is paid to a private landlord) or social rented (in which rent is paid to a local authority or housing association).

Temporary accommodation
Housing such as Bed and Breakfast (B&B) or hostel accommodation that may be used in an emergency to accommodate households who are homeless whilst they await an offer of permanent accommodation.

Universal Credit
The new benefit introduced by the Welfare Reform Act 2012 between October 2013 and December 2017 that will replace a number of benefits including
- Income related Job Seekers Allowance
- Income related Employment Support Allowance
- Income Support (including support for mortgage interest)
- Working Tax Credits
- Child Tax Credits
- Housing Benefit

Unsuitable housing
All circumstances where households are living in housing which is in some way unsuitable, whether because of its size, type, design, location, condition or cost. Households can have more than one reason for being in unsuitable housing.

YSS
The Youth Support Service (YSS) works with partners, covering the whole of Surrey, to encourage participation in education, training and employment, reduce offending and anti-social behaviour, and provide support for homeless young people.