

**RUNNYMEDE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH  
SLEEPING STRATEGY**

**2019 - 2024**

**(Formerly known as the Homelessness Strategy)**

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## Executive Summary

Homelessness and rough sleeping are harmful to individuals and communities. There are many circumstances that cause a housing difficulty and this document will look at the reasons for these difficulties within Runnymede over the last few years and how we plan to tackle these going forward.

The document sets out our commitment to preventing homelessness at an earlier stage and our ambition to reduce repeat homelessness. This approach applies equally to all people with housing difficulties in the borough. The Council aims to assist households to sustain existing tenancies where the accommodation is suitable for their needs and affordable within their income.

This Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out our broad strategic vision and the key objectives we aim to achieve when addressing housing need within Runnymede. The strategy is formulated having conducted a review of all forms of homelessness within the borough.

The strategy has been written against the backdrop of far-reaching reform of housing and social welfare policy. This means that the document will have to be flexible enough to accommodate the impacts of these changes as they unfold throughout the life of the strategy.

### Our vision

The Council aims to relieve and prevent homelessness, through high quality housing interventions. In developing our Homelessness Strategy our vision for Runnymede is:

*“To focus on early intervention, ensuring our households are supported and signposted at the earliest opportunity to resolve their housing difficulty. To provide a tailored and holistic service to our households to prevent them from becoming homeless”*

### Our targets to achieve over the next 5 years

In this strategy we identify four objectives that we think are essential to addressing housing difficulties in the borough. Within each objective, there are a number of other aims that we will set out to achieve. These are set out in full in Appendix C, and below is a summary:

□ **Objective One: Early intervention for homeless prevention**

We will improve public awareness of housing shortages and introduce simpler ways of notification when a household is at threat of homelessness. We will provide a sustainment package to assist households to manage their tenancies, access employment, education, training or volunteering and will consider the impact of housing on wider outcomes such as health.



- **Objective Two: Ensuring sufficient supply of accommodation**  
We will ensure that there is sufficient good quality accommodation available, whilst keeping bed & breakfast usage low by introducing shared houses for single homeless households.
  
- **Objective Three: Partnership working and holistic support**  
We will develop enhanced personalised housing plans to give more than just housing advice to those approaching for housing assistance. We will work in partnership with the FUSE group (Facilitate, Understand, Support, Empower) and other agencies to give meaningful bespoke assistance to vulnerable households.
  
- **Objective Four: Meeting the needs of those in temporary accommodation**  
We will offer a holistic solutions approach so that households are in receipt of the correct benefits, assisted to secure employment, education or volunteering opportunities whilst preparing them for their own tenancy and move on from temporary housing.



# Introduction

## Background

Runnymede Borough Council has a strong history of working in partnership to tackle housing issues and to prevent homelessness. The numbers of households approaching for housing assistance have remained consistent but the opportunities available to assist people with their housing difficulty have diminished due to the high cost of housing within the Borough.

This strategy focuses on preventing homelessness at the earliest opportunity, to enable people to remain in their existing homes where possible or help them into alternative, suitable and sustainable accommodation, when they are no longer able to remain in their home. The strategy focuses on helping to find accommodation for those people who do become homeless and to help them to build a positive future.

Homelessness is harmful to individuals, to families and to communities and the cumulative costs associated with it, both human and financial are vast, escalating and unsustainable. Homelessness can lead people into a cycle that can have a profound effect on all aspects of life. Insecure, unsuitable or no accommodation, affects physical health, mental health and wellbeing, educational achievement, the ability to gain and sustain employment and puts pressure on personal and professional relationships as well as the wider community. These effects, especially on children, can be life long and can cause repeated homelessness of a generational nature.

The Council is aware that the task ahead will be a challenge, due to increasing pressures on Local Authority finances, the impact of the additional duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and continued effects of welfare reform. However this strategy aims to address these issues in a proactive and sustainable way.

## Defining Homelessness

There are many different views on what being homeless means. Homelessness is not defined just by rough sleeping on the street, there are a number of different factors that determine whether a person is homeless. The Housing Act 1996 defines homelessness in sections 175 to 178 of the Act.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) defines statutory homelessness as *“A household is legally homeless if, either, they do not have accommodation that they are entitled to occupy, which is accessible and physically available to them, or they have accommodation but it is not reasonable for them to continue to occupy this accommodation”*

This document will set out how we take account of all forms of homelessness or threatened homelessness, within the meaning of the 1996 Act, as amended. It will assess the levels of homelessness and likely homelessness through the homelessness review and then it will set out Runnymede Borough Council’s strategy to address these issues to prevent homelessness within the borough.



## The purpose of a Homelessness Review and Strategy

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on every local authority to develop and publish a Homelessness Strategy, setting out how the local authority intends to tackle and prevent homelessness in their area. The strategy must be based on a review of all forms of homelessness within that local authority's area and should be reviewed at least every five years.

The purpose of the Homelessness Review is to establish the extent of homelessness in the area, identify future trends and any gaps in the service currently being provided. Therefore, the review will assess:

- The levels and likely future levels of homelessness in the borough
- Activities that are carried out which prevent homelessness, secure accommodation for homeless people and provide support to people who are or may become homeless
- Resources available to carry out these activities

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. We have conducted an Equality Impact Assessment whilst framing this document and as such, our approach and actions to achieve during the life of this document, have been formulated using the latest intelligence figures available and where necessary we have made relevant adjustments to the document to address any potentially negative effect. These assessments will be reviewed regularly.

## The Strategy Vision

Building upon the Corporate vision and mission for Runnymede, our vision in developing and delivering this strategy to tackle homelessness is:

*“To focus on early intervention, ensuring our households are supported and signposted at the earliest opportunity to resolve their housing difficulty. To provide a tailored and holistic service to our households to prevent them from becoming homeless”*

Runnymede Homelessness Strategy Vision 2019-24

This strategy will be an accessible document that is used by both internal and external stakeholders. The document will be kept under regular review to ensure that we are working toward achieving our targets.

To ensure that this Strategy is effective, we have developed it in accordance with our other strategies<sup>1</sup> that contribute to homelessness reduction and other aspects that are associated with homelessness such as health and wellbeing.

<sup>1</sup>Tenancy Strategy 2018  
Temporary Accommodation Strategy



The Corporate vision for Runnymede Borough Council and our mission are set out in our Corporate Business Plan 2016-2020:

*“A vibrant Borough with high quality environment, where we maximise opportunities with partners to provide services which are highly regarded by local people”*

Corporate Vision 2016-20

*“To deliver services, enhance our environment, and improve the economy by working with local people and partners for the greater good of the community.”*

Corporate Mission 2016-20





## Homelessness – Context

The issue of Homelessness has risen on both media and political agendas over recent years and all of the major party manifestos made reference to homelessness in the June 2017 Election. Since then, the Government has pledged to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and to eliminate it altogether by 2027.

Homelessness is a national and regional challenge. At just over 59,000 homelessness acceptances across England in 2016/17 this is 19,000 higher than in 2009/10. With a rise of 2 per cent over the past year, acceptances are now 48 per cent above their 2009/10 low point. However, administrative changes mean that these official statistics understate the true increase in homelessness over recent years<sup>2</sup>.

### Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is one of the biggest changes in housing legislation since the Homelessness Act 2002 and came into force on 03 April 2018. The Act places a duty on English Councils to provide anyone homeless or facing homelessness within a 56 day period (extended from the previous 28 day period) with advice and support to prevent them from becoming homelessness.

A brief summary of the main provisions of the Act:

- Councils must complete a thorough assessment of a household's housing needs, including the circumstances that caused the housing difficulty, the specific needs of individuals within the household and preferences as well as the support that the household may require.
- Once a detailed assessment of the household needs is completed, a "Personalised Housing Plan", outlining the steps that the household will take and the steps the Council will take to help them to prevent or relief their homelessness should be agreed.
- The Act introduced new "prevention" and "relief" duties, requiring Councils to proactively assist households to remain in their existing homes or support them into alternative accommodation during the 56 day prevention or relief duty.
  - **The prevention duty** aims to prevent a household that is threatened with homelessness from becoming homeless. This may include activities to enable applicants to remain in their current home or find alternative accommodation. The duty lasts for 56 days but may be extended if the local authority is continuing with efforts to prevent homelessness
  - **The relief duty** is owed to households that are already homeless and require help to secure settled accommodation. The duty lasts 56 days and can only be extended by a local authority if the households do not qualify for the main homelessness duty.

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<sup>2</sup> Crisis, Homelessness Monitor England 2018



- There are changes in the reporting of Government statistics from the old P1E return to the new H-CLIC return, requiring far more “real” data to be provided to Government quarterly
- Alongside the legislation was the publication of an updated Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities 2018.
- Specified public authorities are now required to refer anyone they consider to be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days to the local authority under a new “duty to refer”, this commenced 1 October 2018.

The detail of the Act has introduced many changes that we are required to implement in performance of our statutory housing duties. The positive focus of the Act is to prevent homelessness and this is the basis of this strategy. The new duties require more detailed and thorough written assessments, creation of personalised, tailored actions plans to assist clients in addressing the causes of their homelessness or reducing barriers to accessing accommodation. A new reporting regime implemented in tandem with the Act requires the collection of a much greater level of detail on every household accessing the Housing Solutions Service. This should enable in depth analysis of the causes of homeless nationally and locally and also the ability to measure outcomes and identify successful strategies.

## Welfare Reform

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced a number of changes to reduce the level of benefit payable. As a result of these measures, there are increasing pressures on low income households to maintain and access accommodation. The changes have limited the amount of benefit payable towards housing costs during a period when these costs have continually increased, leaving households struggling to pay their rent. Some of the most significant implications for homelessness following welfare reform include:

- **Benefit Cap:** The Government introduced a benefit cap, capping the maximum amount of benefit a person can receive each year. Households in Runcyede with dependent children are now capped at receiving £20,000 per year or £384.62 per week and single people are capped at £13,400 per year or £257.69 per week. This reduction in benefits has resulted in people struggling to afford to remain in their home and as a result live with the threat of homelessness.
- **Social Sector Size Criteria:** Colloquially referred to as the ‘bedroom tax’ this is a reduction in housing benefit if you occupy a Council or housing association property and are classed as having a spare bedroom. This charge applies to eligible rent and is reduced by 14% for one additional room and a 25% reduction if you have two or more extra bedrooms.
- **Local Housing Allowance (LHA):** LHA is the maximum level of housing benefit that can be claimed within a local area. Historically the LHA was set at the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile of market rents for properties within a designated Broad Market Rental Area (BMRA)<sup>3</sup>. These LHA rates were capped in April 2016 for a four year period, which has meant that as private sector rent levels have increased, and the amount of benefit our households can claim to rent the properties has

<sup>3</sup> <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7833/CBP-7833.pdf>



remained the same, there are fewer properties to rent which are accessible to households entitled to whole or partial housing benefit.

- **Under 35's:** Single people under the age of 35 are only entitled to claim LHA at the shared accommodation rate in the private rented sector. This means that they will only receive benefit at the rate of a single room in a shared house, even if they are living in a self-contained flat. This previously applied to people under the age of 25. There is an exemption for people in receipt of specific disability payments.
- **Universal Credit (UC):** Replaces a number of unemployment benefits and housing benefit that were previously claimed separately and paid weekly. This is paid as one monthly payment made directly to the claimant. Data from department for work and pensions (DWP) suggests the UC has had a positive impact on the labour market in the initial pathfinder areas but it also shows the tenants who have moved onto UC have built significant rent arrears due to the delay in the first payment. UC was rolled out to full service in Runnymede on 28 November 2018.
- **Rent Reduction:** Local Authorities and Registered Providers of social housing in England were required to reduce social housing rents by 1% a year for 4 years from 1 April 2016, or the annual rent review date for Registered Providers. This has reduced the available income to social housing providers, impacting their ability to provide services and develop new social homes. At approximately £1.00 per week for a Runnymede Borough Council tenant the saving is not significant but it does reduce the annual housing benefit bill. Over the 30 years from 2016 the compound effect of this reduction will reduce the income to the Housing Revenue Account by £50,000,000 reducing the Council's ability to invest in additional social housing.

## Homelessness Costs

### *The Human Costs*

The impact of homelessness on people is huge, particularly children born into homelessness. Research shows that homeless infants experience a significant decline in general development function between 4 and 40 months.<sup>4</sup> Evidence also shows that being homeless or in temporary accommodation during pregnancy are associated with an increased risk of preterm birth, low birth weight, poor mental health in infants and children and developmental delay.<sup>5</sup> All of these factors are, in turn, associated with the risk of poor outcomes in later life. As a result of a preoccupation with addressing their unstable and unsafe living conditions, a person's capacity to effectively parent can be significantly impaired.<sup>6</sup>

For a lot of people who face homelessness, this is not the only issue. Homelessness is closely linked with often complex and chaotic life experiences, mental health problems, drugs and alcohol dependencies, experience of prison or care systems. A traumatic childhood is often part of a homeless person's life history.<sup>7</sup> There is significant evidence that links homelessness with the impact on a person's health

<sup>4</sup> Slead et al. 2011; Coll et al., 1998

<sup>5</sup> Stein & Gelberg, 2000; Richards, Merrill & Baksh, 2011)

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.qni.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/homelessness\\_babies\\_families.pdf](https://www.qni.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/homelessness_babies_families.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://lankellychase.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Hard-Edges-Mapping-SMD-2015.pdf>



and wellbeing. Homeless households often experience health inequalities, poorer health and wellbeing as well as a lower life expectancy than the general population.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Financial Costs**

The financial cost of dealing with homelessness is high, with the National Audit Office estimating that the cost of homelessness in all its forms to be in excess of £1 billion per year. In Runnymede, as of 26 October 2018, there are 90 households in temporary accommodation. From 2011 a Temporary Accommodation Management fee was, payable through the housing benefit system for properties procured for use as temporary accommodation. A limited amount of subsidy was claimed in Runnymede as most of the TA in use was from Council owned properties or mobile homes. In April 2017, the Temporary Accommodation Management Fee was replaced by the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant. This grant was to offset the loss in Housing Benefit subsidy, with the remainder ring-fenced for 'work to prevent or resolve homelessness'. This grant acknowledged that local authorities may require additional staffing resources, increased levels of temporary and emergency accommodation.

<b>Funding Year</b>	<b>Grant</b>
<b>2017/18</b>	£199,912
<b>2018/19</b>	£230,018
<b>2019/20</b>	£222,540

In addition to the Support Grant, Runnymede Borough Council has been awarded a total of £70,209 in 'New Burdens' funding for the period 2017 to 2020. This was made available to the Council for the additional work involved in preparing for the implementation of the new responsibilities brought by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The associated costs of homelessness do not only fall on a local housing authority. Research has shown that the cumulative costs of addressing severe and multiple disadvantages in single vulnerable homeless people alone are over £10 billion per year<sup>9</sup> and these people typically require additional support from public services such as police, hospitals, GPs etc. Evidence shows that people who experience homelessness for three months or longer cost on average £4,298 per person to the NHS service, £2,099 per person for mental health services and £11,991 per person in contact with the criminal justice system.<sup>10</sup> The impact of homelessness is significant on the person, the community and on public services.

<sup>8</sup> The Impact of Homelessness on Health, Local Government Association

<sup>9</sup> <https://lankellychase.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Hard-Edges-Mapping-SMD-2015.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Better than cure 2016: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/cost-of-homelessness/better-than-cure-2016/>



# Homelessness Review

## The data reviewed

The triggers and causes for homelessness are often multiple and complex. In developing services which effectively tackle homelessness it is necessary to understand the current and future levels of homelessness and the interplay between all the factors that cause it. It is also important to reflect upon what activities are already being carried out and the resource required to achieve our longer term aims.

In carrying out a review of all levels of homelessness within Runnymede, we have analysed:

- Data from the 2011 Census
- Findings from the 2018 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)
- The homeless context, both national and locally
- Locally recorded housing advice and homelessness figures since 2014/15, including:
  - Number of approaches for housing advice and reasons for approach
  - Number of cases prevented or relieved<sup>11</sup> in accordance with legislation
  - Number of homeless applications made and the decisions reached on the applications
  - The breakdown of household type for those accepted for the main housing duty
  - Temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast (B&B)
- Student accommodation
- Rough Sleeping estimate figures since 2010
- Locally recorded Housing Register figures since 2014/15, including:
  - The current allocations policy
  - The number of new approaches each year to join, including the number accepted onto the register
  - The number of lets and the average wait to be allocated social housing
- The options available to single people in the area
- The private rented sector, including our private letting scheme to engage with landlords to let their properties through the Council

It is this review that has highlighted the gaps in service provision in Runnymede and has formed the basis for the objectives we will set out to achieve.

## Local Context – Census 2011 and SHMA 2018

Runnymede has 7,804 hectares of land, of which 6,078 hectares are green belt. A substantial proportion of the Runnymede borough falls within a flood zone area. Green belt and floodplains in the area make it difficult to gain planning approval for

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<sup>11</sup> Housing Act 1996, as amended





additional homes as well as increasing the pressures on housing services when there is significant rain and flooding.

Figures from the 2011 Census show that Runnymede has a population of 80,510. At that time the majority of the population, 38.7%, fell in the 18-44 years age category, 25.2% were 45-64 years old, 19.3% were 0-17 years old and 16.8% were 64+. Home ownership was the majority tenure with 69.5% of households owning their own home, which was higher than the national average of 63.4%. A further 12.69% were accommodated in social housing with the remaining in the private rented sector. Only 2.7% of households were unemployed.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) was updated in 2018. The SHMA shows that the population had grown to 86,967 in mid-2016, an increase of 7.9% since 2011 or 17% since 1991 and anticipates the growth to continue at a rate of 13.5%, totalling a population of 98,727 by 2030. This growth rate will mean we require additional homes in the borough.

The SHMA study also established the entry-level costs of housing in Runnymede, using the Valuation Office Agency<sup>12</sup> (VOA) data for private rental. For the purpose of the analysis, lower quartile rents have been taken to reflect the entry level point in the market, covering a 12 month period to March 2017.

Analysis shows lower quartile rents by size of dwelling across all dwelling sizes. The table also shows the overall lower quartile rent across all dwellings. This is an important figure as we are able to compare it with equivalent data from the previous assessment of affordable housing need (which used data for the year to March 2014). The table below shows that compared to the previous assessment, there has been a monthly increase in the monthly rent of £125 which represents a 15% increase.

Data for March 2017	
Bedroom Size	Monthly Cost
Room only	£450
Studio	£700
1 bedroom	£850
2 bedroom	£1,050
3 bedroom	£1,300
4+ bedrooms	£1,695
All dwellings	£950

Data from SHMA 2018, lower quartile rents for the 12 months up to March 2017

Although the data figures for 2018 are not available, it is expected that these lower quartile rent figures will have continued to have increased, reducing the affordability of homes across all dwellings.

	Assessment 2014	Assessment 2017	Change in monthly rent	% change
Runnymede	£825	£950	+£125	+15%

2014 assessment compared with the 2017 assessment of lower quartile rents

<sup>12</sup> Source: Valuation Office Agency (2017)



The SHMA also highlights the rental value trends between 2011 and 2016, evidencing the increase in rents since 2011 and the comparator across Surrey, the South East and Nationally. Whilst all of the costs have increased both nationally and locally, these changes have seen a greater difference within this borough:

	Median 2016	Median 2011-16		LQ Rent 2016	LQ 2011-16	
		Absolute change	% change		Absolute change	% Change
Runnymede	£1,173	£241	21%	£950	£200	21%
Surrey	£1,175	£233	20%	£925	£175	19%
South East	£850	£150	18%	£675	£100	15%
England	£650	£75	12%	£500	£50	10%

Data from 2018 SHMA comparing lower quartile rents from 2011 – 2016

Some of the other findings from the SHMA show that:

- Mean waged incomes have continued to increase;
- 337 additional units of affordable housing will be needed per year;
- When considering the needs of households owed a statutory housing duty there is high demand for two bedroom households;

## Policy Context

Runnymede's corporate plan 2016-2020 describes the overall priorities for the Council during this period. It identifies housing as one of these priorities and outlines the actions we aim to achieve:

- To continue managing and developing the Councils housing stock effectively in light of government policy and legislative reform
- To continue working with the private sector to provide improved and additional housing, including affordable and key worker.

## Identifying current and future levels of homelessness

### *Housing Advice & Homeless Prevention*

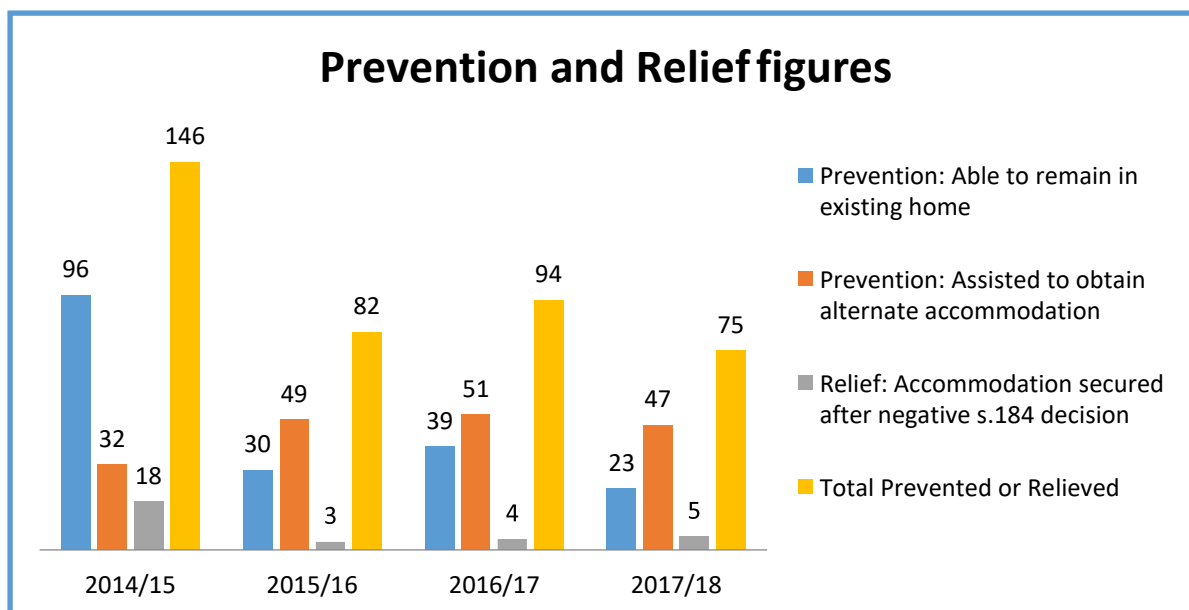
The Housing Solutions Service has received on average 1089 approaches for housing assistance each year<sup>13</sup> from households that felt they were at threat of losing their home or in accommodation unsuitable for their needs. Most of these households received advice and information to assist them to sustain their existing accommodation or support in looking for an alternate home.

<sup>13</sup> Between 2014-2018



Historically Runnymede has a good track record of preventing households from becoming homeless or being able to support households to ‘relieve’<sup>14</sup> their homeless situation and therefore use of temporary accommodation was limited. However, successful prevention and relief outcomes have reduced significantly due to the pressures on the service such as welfare reform. The table below that in 2014/15 we had a high number of preventions where households could remain in their existing home. An example of this is where we have negotiated with the landlord of a private rented tenant for them to continue renting their home. However, in August 2014 the first benefit cap was introduced, restricting benefits to £26,000 per year. This contributed in properties becoming unaffordable and consequently, fewer tenants could afford to remain in their homes. In autumn 2016, the Government reduced the maximum benefits per year to £20,000, further reducing affordability in the private rented sector and therefore less homeless prevention successes.

Where we were previously able to assist households to remain in their existing home, this has become increasingly difficult, predominantly due to housing costs becoming unaffordable. Over recent years, the buoyancy of the private rented market has made procuring properties a challenge as landlords have been able to obtain higher rents by letting to the professional market or selling the property to realise their asset, contributing to the reduction in preventions. The table below shows the number of households we were able to prevent or relieve over the last 4 financial years.



Homeless prevention and relief figures between 2014/18

<sup>14</sup>The definition of “relieve” here is prior to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. This refers to people who have been assessed under homeless legislation but have been decided that they are not owed the full housing duty. This could be, for example, if they are not considered to be in priority need or if they have been found intentional homelessness. In these cases, even though we do not owe a full duty to house, we have assisted them with housing and therefore “relieved” their homelessness. This definition has since changed in accordance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.





The methods of preventing a household from becoming homeless range considerably. For example, Runnymede Borough Council have negotiated and mediated with parents who are asking their children to leave the family home or landlords who are evicting their tenants. We have set up affordable repayment plans for those in rent arrears to ensure a tenant can afford to continue to live where they are across all tenures. We have also been able to support households into alternate housing both within the private rented sector, supported housing and the social housing sector. We will need to build on these successes and continue to help households with their housing situations, despite housing solutions becoming harder to find.

### Homelessness Approaches

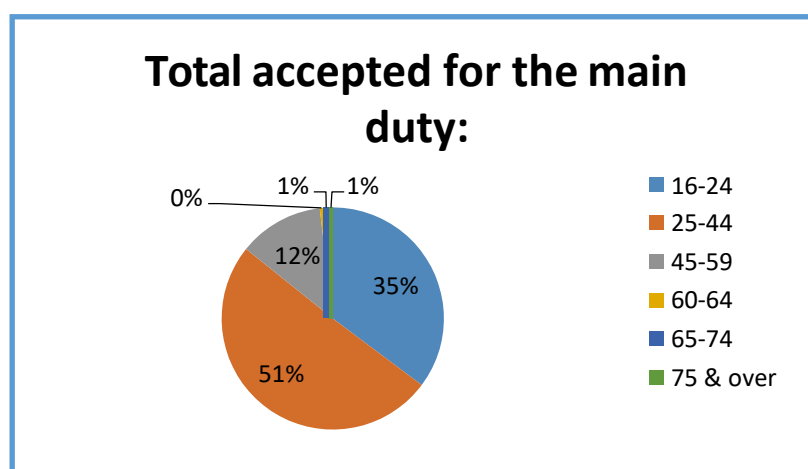
Regrettably, there are times when we are unsuccessful in preventing or relieving a household's homelessness. In these circumstances we will need to determine if we owe a household the 'main' housing duty<sup>15</sup>. This is an assessment of whether the household are considered to be eligible, homeless, in priority need, not intentionally homeless and if they have a local connection to Runnymede. Prior to the change of legislation<sup>16</sup> we took on average of 133 homeless applications per year as outlined below<sup>17</sup>.

Year	No. Applications	Accepted for main duty	Not homeless	Not in Priority Need	Intentionally Homeless	Ineligible
2014/15	131	98	14	12	7	0
2015/16	154	120	9	16	6	3
2016/17	117	76	11	15	14	1
2017/18	128	78	30	9	10	1

Breakdown of homeless applications 2014-2018

Of the 372 cases that were accepted as being owed the main duty, between the financial years 2014 to 2018, the following data breakdown the ages of approach and the household type:

2014 – 2018 ages of accepted applications	
Age:	Total accepted:
16-24	131
25-44	188
45-59	46
60-64	2
65-74	3
75 & over	2



<sup>15</sup> In accordance with the legislation Housing Act 1996 as amended

<sup>16</sup> Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

<sup>17</sup> Between 2014-18



Table and graph showing the age ages of those accepted for the main duty 2014/18

The table below shows the breakdown of household types for those accepted for the main duty. These figures are important to consider when looking at the trends of households approaching as homeless, and the resources required to meet these needs.

Couple with dependent children or expectant mothers	Lone parent households with dependent children		One person household		All other household groups	Total
	Male applicant	Female applicant	Male applicant	Female applicant		
106	17	186	30	22	11	372

Table showing the breakdown of household types accepted for the main duty 2014/18

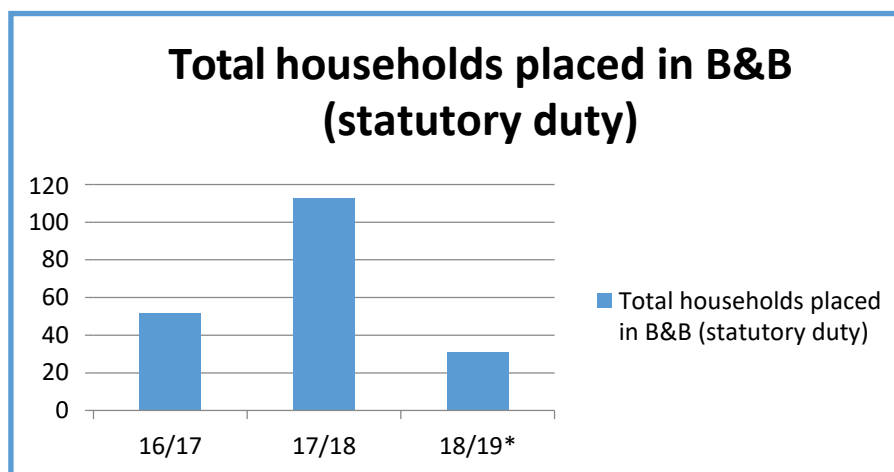
For those accepted for the main housing duty, we are required to secure accommodation for them. Generally this may mean households residing in temporary accommodation whilst we look at a longer term solution such as private rental or an offer of social housing. Temporary accommodation and/or the main duty can also be bought to an end if for example, the household become ineligible, they are evicted for breach of tenancy, such as rent arrears or if they surrender the accommodation.

Runnymede has its own housing stock which includes units of temporary accommodation. In 2011 Runnymede had 30 units of temporary accommodation, compared to the 90 units used in 2018. In some instances it has been necessary to use nightly paid emergency accommodation such as Bed and Breakfast (B&B) establishments, which are usually outside of the borough due to costs and availability. Since 2016/17 we have had significant B&B usage, however this has been reduced during 2018/19 due to our commitment as part of the new duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, to reduce use of B&B. There is a high financial and personal cost to a placement in B&B outside the borough.

The Council is only able to recover approximately 50% of the costs of a B&B placement through charges and it is very difficult for an applicant to take positive steps to address their homelessness whilst in such accommodation. People placed in B&B can be required to move if the establishment cannot extend a booking causing further disruption and upheaval for them, which may cause multiple problems for them, such as social isolation, travel difficulty, issues accessing education, employment and all significantly impacts on their mental health. For example, a household becomes homeless and is placed into B&B in Slough, they could then be moved into a placement in Hounslow before we are able to provide temporary housing and then moved again when they secure alternate



accommodation in the private or social sector. The Council would always try to avoid this and is working to increase provision within the borough as a priority. This is an unsettling time which has a detrimental impact on families and is also money spent by the local authority that we could use on other homeless prevention facilities.



Total households placed in B&B between 2016-2019\*Total up to 26/11/2018

It is important as part of a Homelessness Review, to look at the 'reasons' for homelessness. Our data illustrates that over the last four years, there are three main reasons that a person has made a homeless application to the Borough. The percentage figures relate to 2017/18:

- Parents no longer willing to accommodate (21%)
- Termination of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (21%)
- Violent relationship breakdown (22%)
- Other – Left prison, hospital, non-violent relationship breakdown, other relatives no longer willing to accommodate, other reason for end of AST (36%)

These three largest reasons for homelessness are consistent with the national picture as to why households are experiencing homelessness and identification of options for these groups will be at the core of this strategy.

The effects of the new legislation<sup>18</sup> are so far largely unknown. There has not been an increase in the number of homeless approaches to date, however there is a significant increase in the time spent assessing applications, completing the required reporting fields, setting up personalised housing plans and providing intensive prevention and relief support. The requirement through the duty to refer gives the capacity for a greater number of applications from institutions such as hospitals as they have a duty to refer, prior to the person being discharged.

<sup>18</sup> Homelessness Reduction Act 2017



## Students

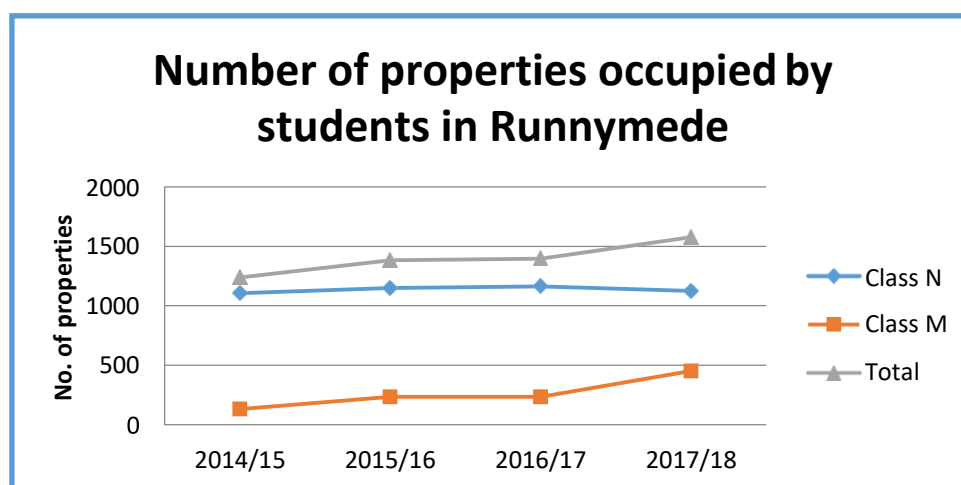
The Royal Holloway University (RHUL) located within Runnymede borough has a significant impact on the availability of rental properties. Data from the Runnymede Council Tax department shows that in the financial year 2017/18 1125 properties were exempt from Council Tax as they were occupied by students (Class N exemption) and 452 which are students halls of residence (Class M exemptions).

	Class N	Class M	Total
2014/15	1107	132	1239
2015/16	1150	233	1383
2016/17	1163	234	1397
2017/18	1125	452	1577

Table showing the number of class N and class M exemptions from 2014 – 2018

These properties used as student housing represent a significant reduction in properties that may otherwise have been available to those aspiring to rent or buy in the Runnymede area. RHUL is located in Englefield Green and a large number of the private rented properties are within the Forest Estate and are ex-council houses purchased under the Right to Buy and then sold on.

The figures available show the continuous number of properties rented by students which reduces the availability of homes to those in need of housing. The number of Class M exemption properties has seen a dramatic increase and although these properties would not be available as rental options to our households in need, they do reduce the number of development opportunities. RHUL were granted permission for an additional 71,128sqm (net) student accommodation (c.2,650 bed spaces) in the approved master plan 2014/15. These will all be built on land that could have otherwise provided general residential properties.



Graph showing the number of properties occupied by students in Runnymede from 2014-2018



## Rough Sleeping

Rough sleeping is a dangerous and isolating experience for individuals. Prolonged periods of rough sleeping have a significant impact on someone's mental and physical health. People sleeping rough are more likely to be victims of crime and almost 17 times more likely to have been victims of violence over a period of 12 months compared to the general public. Women are particularly vulnerable, nearly 1 in 4 have been sexually assaulted whilst rough sleeping. Additionally, many people who rough sleep develop issues with drugs and alcohol<sup>19</sup>.

It can be difficult to work out the number of people sleeping rough for a number of reasons. People bed down at different times, move about, and can be hidden away in derelict buildings. However, each year every local authority in England is required to provide an estimate or count of the number of people sleeping rough in their area. This information is then submitted to the Government and provides an estimate of the number of individuals sleeping out on any one night in England<sup>20</sup>

In autumn 2017, 4,751 people slept rough on a typical night in the UK. This was an increase of 15% on the previous year<sup>21</sup>. In response to the increasing numbers of people sleeping rough the Government has produced a Rough Sleeping Strategy with the aim of halving rough sleeping by 2020 and to end it all together by 2027.

In Runnymede Borough Council generally there are low numbers of people sleeping rough compared with national figures, however a single rough sleeper without access to accommodation or assistance is not acceptable. Many rough sleepers will avoid contact with authorities and although they might be entitled to assistance do not approach the local authority due to a number of reasons such as mental health problems, lack of documentation, previous history of eviction or crime, fear of social services or police involvement.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total estimate of rough sleepers:	1	8	6	2	13	3	5	4	4

Estimated number of rough sleepers in Runnymede 2010-18

The table above shows the numbers we reported to Government each year since 2010. There will also be individuals who do not sleep rough but are in vulnerable,

<sup>19</sup> Crisis Rough Sleeping and complex needs: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/rough-sleeping/rough-sleepers-and-complex-needs/>

<sup>20</sup> Homeless Link: <https://www.homeless.org.uk/facts/homelessness-in-numbers/how-many-people-sleep-rough-in-england>

<sup>21</sup> Rough Sleeping Strategy: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/733421/Rough-Sleeping-Strategy\\_WEB.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/733421/Rough-Sleeping-Strategy_WEB.pdf)



inadequate situations which provide shelter but present other risks such as violence, sexual exploitation or financial abuse. Whilst a number of rough sleepers may choose to live as they are and are reluctant to engage with the support, we are committed to supporting the Government’s target of ending rough sleeping and we hope to achieve this during the life of this document, exceeding the target set by government.

### *Runnymede Housing Register*

In addition to those who are homeless or facing homelessness, there are a significant number of people living in insecure or unsuitable housing. In accordance with our statutory function we hold and administer a Housing Register for those in housing need. Properties are allocated through a choice based lettings scheme. Our allocations scheme is specifically designed to prioritise according to housing need, known as reasonable preference<sup>22</sup>, such as welfare, size and suitability of accommodation rather than just tenure.

The scheme is subject to regular review, to reflect changes in government legislation or policy, or as a result of case law. There is an annual review of household applications ensuring that all applicants are awarded correct reasonable preference priority and changes in circumstances are taken into account. As of 1 April 2018, there were 939 households on the Housing Register for social housing.

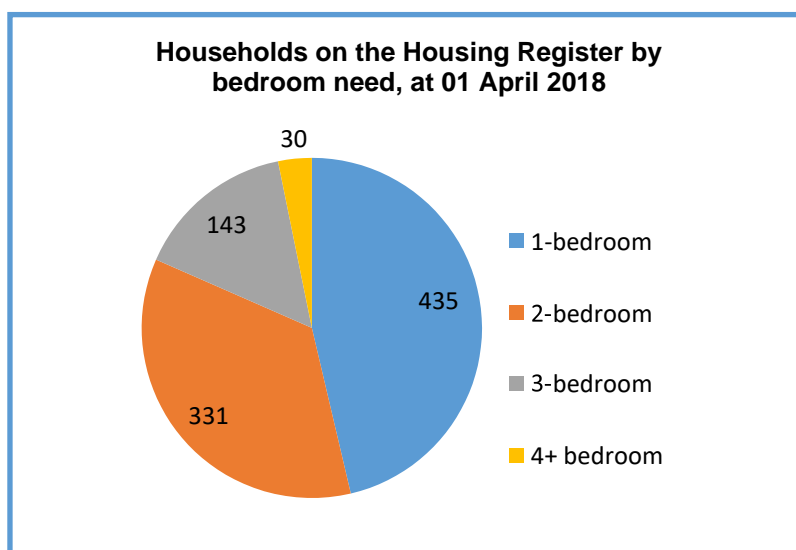


Table showing the households by bedroom size on the Housing Register on 01 April 2018

We receive in excess of 800 new applications to join the Housing Register each year. Whilst not all of these new applications are accepted onto the scheme, in accordance with our allocations policy criteria, there are over 800 households per

<sup>22</sup> Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Authorities  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/5918/2171391.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5918/2171391.pdf)



year who are seeking accommodation for reasons such as overcrowding, difficulty with rental payments or poor living conditions.

As of 25 February 2019 there were a total of 1169 households registered and waiting for social housing. The table below outlines the priority bands that are awarded to each household depending on their level of need or 'reasonable preference'. It's important to note that Band D2 enables a household onto the register and represents people in unstable and expensive housing but that they have little prospect of a move to social housing.

Band	Total on the list
A	17
B	46
C1	192
C2	3
D1	38
D2	873
<b>Total</b>	<b>1169</b>

Total on the list by banding as of 25 January 2019

It is government policy that social housing is no longer the only answer to housing difficulties and that social rents are often replaced by an affordable rent which is comparable with prices of rented housing in the private sector. For those customers registered in band D2, they will be supported to consider alternate housing options such as private rental and shared home ownership.

The table below highlights that the demand for social housing continues to outweigh supply. During the period 2014-18 we let on average 283 properties each year. These lettings were made to a combination of Council owned properties and properties owned by registered social landlords. Despite letting this number of homes, there were still hundreds of households who were in an identified housing need waiting for housing on the Housing Register.

Financial Year	New applications to join the register	Total on the Housing Register <sup>23</sup>	Total lets
2014/15	825	842	248
2015/16	813	1055	351
2016/17	836	1220	243
2017/18	878	788	291
2018/19 <sup>24</sup>	596	939	173

Table showing the number on the Housing Register, new applications for the register and total lets per year from 2014/15 – 2018/19 up to 26 Nov 2018.

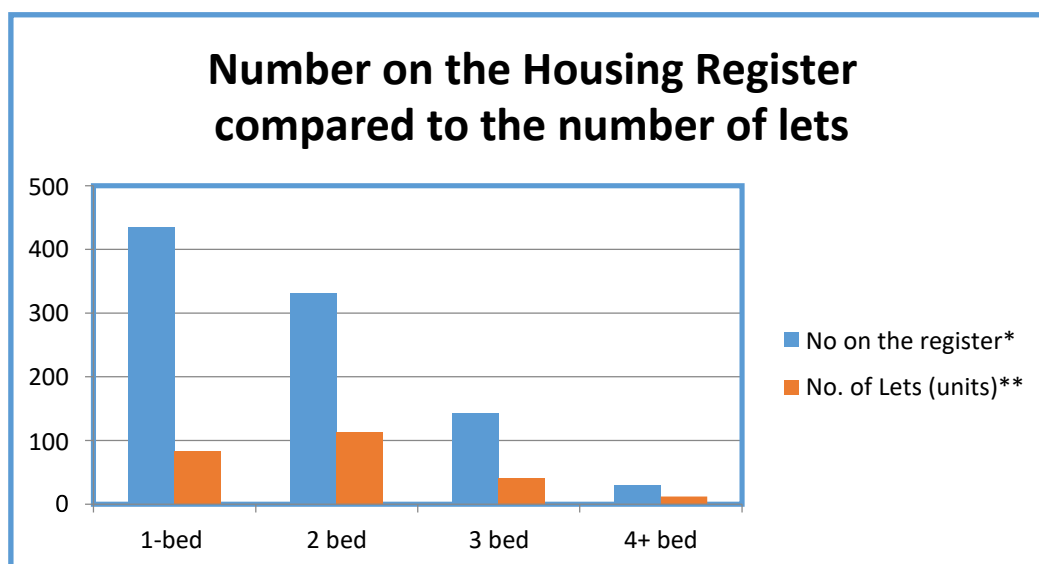
<sup>23</sup> As of 1<sup>st</sup> of April each financial year

<sup>24</sup> Financial year to date, up until 26 November 2018





The graph below shows the number of households on the Housing Register at 01 April 2018 compared to the number of lets made during the period 2017-18. This shows the disparity between the number of applications accepted onto our Housing Register in accordance with our Allocations Scheme<sup>25</sup> and the availability of properties for those in need. There is a huge difference in available supply of social housing, compared to the demand. We are very aware that social housing alone cannot resolve the housing issues we are facing and we are committed to finding alternative options in the private sector or through partners to prevent someone from becoming homeless or to resolve a homeless situation.



Number on the Housing Register compared to number of properties let 2017/18

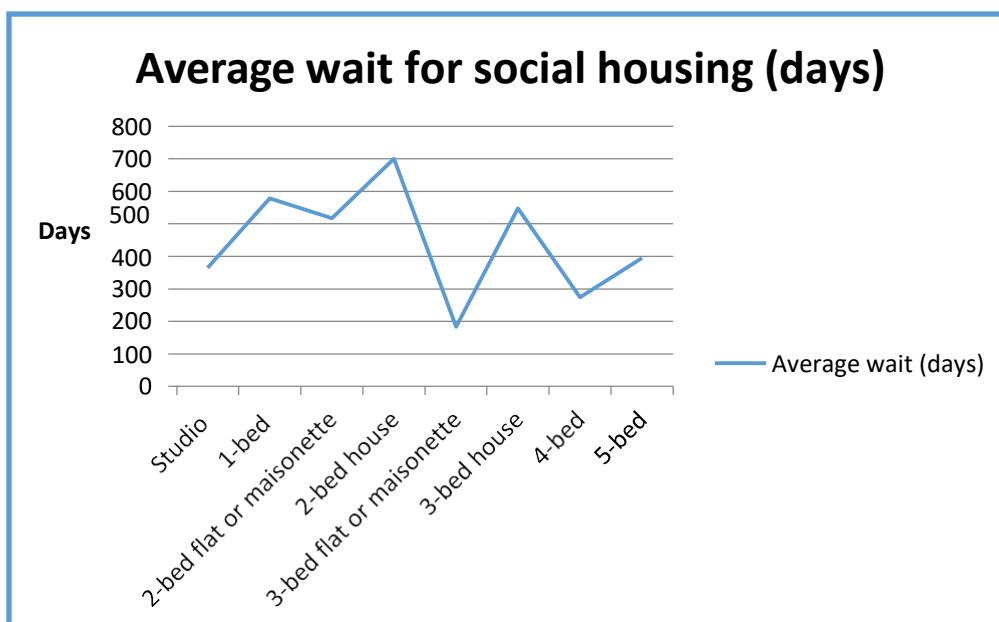
Social housing provision is crucial to some households facing homelessness. This provision ensures that there is a safe place for someone with multiple needs to call home whilst they are given assistance to address their other problems. It is however, important to acknowledge that there is not enough social housing stock available to meet the needs of all those who seek assistance.

During 2017/18 it took on average 445 days before a household were successfully housed from a high priority band, however the longest wait for someone housed in this period was 5110 days. The allocation of social housing is based on the priority band the household is awarded, there will be households who wait a much greater period of time. These figures are also based on people who have actually been offered social housing, there will be households who wait on the Housing Register for a much greater length of time without being offered housing.

<sup>25</sup> Current Allocations Policy at the time of writing







Average wait in days for an allocation of social housing by bedroom size in 2017/18

The table above shows the average number of days it took a person to be successful with their application for social housing during the financial year 2017/18. The average wait for social housing in Runnymede over all bedroom sizes is 445 days which in comparison to national waiting times that span several years, is not considered to be very long. However, this wait for social housing is felt to be a long wait by many households who are in desperate situations. This date can be misleading as a household in Band D2, will have to wait substantially longer to be offered accommodation. On 25 February 2019 there were 873 households waiting in Band D2, the longest active application still waiting to move has been registered for 7634 days. There are 44 households that have waited for over 10 years.

We have designed our Allocations Scheme to prioritise housing for those in need. Although the wait for social housing, in comparison is not long, these waits of approximately a year, are unlikely to resolve an immediate homeless issue and therefore these households will need to explore and consider alternate housing solutions such as accessing private rented accommodation. Similarly, those in the lower bands for housing are not likely to receive an offer of social housing for a much greater length of time, if at all.

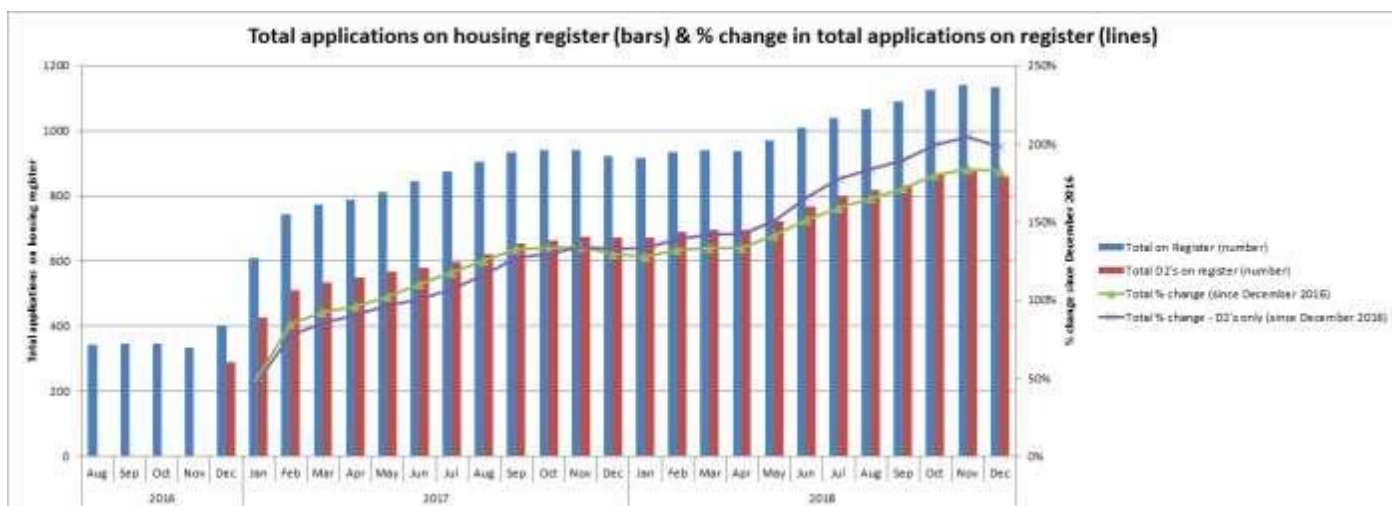


The table below breaks down the number of households on the waiting list as of 21 January 2019 by their band and in comparison to the number of lets to that same band in the six month period from 21 July 2018 to 21 January 2019. This shows the clear difference in lets to the number on the lowest band, D2. We therefore need to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of alternate housing solutions available to these households. It is a complex situation to create an Allocation Scheme that responds to need with a limited housing stock. A household in private rented accommodation might wait 10 years for an offer of social housing but if they have another child they could access a social housing property within a year due to the improved ratio between supply and demand for this size home.

Band:	Total on Register at 21 Jan 19:	Total lets from 21 July 18 to 21 Jan 19:
Band A	17	7
Band B	45	11
Band C1	181	49
Band C2	3	0
Band D1	33	3
Band D2	852	45
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1131</b>	<b>115</b>

Total number of application on the register at 21 January 2019 and total lets per band between 21 July 2018 and 21 January 2019.

The table below shows the total number of households on the Housing Register at the end of each month from August 2016 to December 2018. It also shows the total number of households on the Housing Register who are in Band D2. Band D2 gives an element of priority to move but a very low one and it's unlikely that a household within this band would be successful for social housing. The graph shows the trend that approaches are increasing but particularly the percentage increase of D2 applications and as you see from the table above, these households are likely to be waiting a long time to be offered housing.



The table below breaks down the number of lets during the financial year 2017/18 by property type. This is important as it shows the limited numbers of certain types of housing i.e. 5 bedroom homes or studios are in short supply but there are very few larger households on the Register so the wait may be shorter than that for a 2 bed home which is needed by 77% of homeless households. This highlights the need for alternate avenues such as private rented housing for single people.

Type/Size:	Studio	1-bed	2-bed flat or maisonette	2-bed house	3-bed flat or maisonette	3-bed house	4-bed	5-bed
No. of Lets:	3	85	80	33	8	33	10	2

Number of lets by bedroom type 2017/18

It is very clear that the demand for social housing completely outweighs the supply and this housing option can no longer be relied upon by homeless households, however it can be possible to move older people into Independent Retirement Living (IRL) slightly quicker. This has multiple benefits as a home will be made available to another household and the older person can benefit from the higher level of management and support provided with their home. Below is a positive example of when we have been able to assist the needs of the elderly.

Mrs B is an 85 year old and was living in large 2 bedroom property. She fell earlier in the year which dramatically impacted on her mobility, this subsequently restricted her access and involvement in the local community. She became very isolated and lonely as she could not leave her home without support.

As the stairs in her house were unmanageable, she had to have her bed brought downstairs. She became very reliant on her daughter and son-in-law for daily support which was only possible around their working hours.

We were able to locate an Independent Retirement Living (IRL) property with level access that she could manage without support. She has since regained her independence, made new friends and can resume her previous involvement in the community.

Case Study: Social housing for over 55 years old

### Single People

There are particular individuals that are at risk of homelessness, for example young people leaving care, ex-offenders, veterans, people with mental health problems or individuals leaving hospital. Many young people who experience homelessness will be in particular need of support to develop skills to manage their affairs and prepare



to take on and sustain a tenancy or operate a household budget. Those estranged from their family, particularly care leavers, may lack the advice and support normally available to young people.

Single people can often have multiple and complex needs and this cohort of households will require additional support and specific housing. We have a strategic relationship with Transform Housing and Support, the main Registered Provider of Supported Housing in the Borough who offer high-quality housing, support and homecare to enhance the lives of their residents.<sup>26</sup> Since September 2016 Runnymede housing team have referred 67 households, of which 28 were accepted and housed, 17 refused or declined, 17 withdrawn and 15 referred on to more suitable accommodation.

The Council has provided grant aid to enable Transform to purchase two properties in the borough during 2018/19 financial year to provide shared houses for single people with lower support needs as part of our response to the lack of provision for this cohort.

Below is a case study outlining the value of supported housing options to young single people in the Runnymede area:

Ms X had been living with her parents but was excluded from the family home following a breakdown of their relationship. She was able to stay temporarily with her Grandmother but following a diagnosis of schizoaffective disorder and ongoing tension in the household, she was asked to leave.

Ms X approached the Council for assistance. We quickly negotiated for her to remain with her Grandmother whilst we sought suitable alternate accommodation for her. We completed the relevant referral forms and she was accepted into Transform housing supported accommodation. She moved into a self-contained flat with weekly support, resolving her homelessness.

**Case Study: Supported housing meeting the needs of a person facing homelessness in Runnymede**

Although there has been support for some single people, it was practice for single people, prior to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, to be provided only with general housing advice. Between the financial years 2014 to 2018, there were 52 formal homeless applications that determined the individual to be classed as “not in priority need”. This meant that our duty to them was one of advice and assistance only. In the same period, there were 52 formal applications from single people that were accepted for the full homeless duty. Only 50% of this client group were owed a formal rehousing duty by the Council but they may all have been genuinely homeless. Although there were 104 formal homeless applications, this does not reflect the true number of single people approaching the Council for advice and assistance. Between 01 April 2017 and 21 January 2018 there were 670 single

<sup>26</sup> Transform website: <https://www.transformhousing.org.uk/about-us>



people contacting the council for housing advice and in the same period 1159 single people who applied to join the Housing Register.

Runnymede Council acknowledges that there needs to be a renewed focus on single homeless people, including those not previously considered to have met the threshold for assistance under legislation<sup>27</sup>. We are committed to developing shared houses for singles to be used as an alternative to expensive, out of borough B&B placements. This will enable us to accommodate more single people within the borough and to provide wraparound support services to these individuals.

Sharing of accommodation is on the increase, 1.83% of households nationally now share, up from 1.4% a year ago<sup>28</sup>. A CIH report "*Building Bridges*" called for more innovative approaches to shared accommodation<sup>29</sup> and a Joseph Rowntree Foundation report also calls for an expansion of shared accommodation in the social sector<sup>30</sup>, which supports our aim.

We will also explore options in the private rental sector and develop our work with schemes such as Runnymede Rentstart. Runnymede Rentstart is operated by Runnymede Citizens Advice and is funded by Runnymede Borough Council to provide help to secure private rented accommodation by providing a deposit bond. In the first quarter of 2018/19, Rentstart were able to accommodate 5 single households, 3 with the bond and 2 without. It is proposed to expand our work with other organisations that are able to access accommodation within the borough and provide financial support based on successful outcomes. This will enable other organisations to directly access these funds when supporting homeless people rather than referring to a third party.

### *Private Rented Sector*

The Localism Act 2011 enables local authorities to discharge their main homelessness duty by offering accommodation in the private rented sector. This is a positive move for Local Authorities but difficult in areas where rent to income ratios are so high such as Runnymede. The Council has a policy in place to offer private rented accommodation by means of discharge, however the barriers below and the requirement for the tenancy to be a minimum 12 months means finding suitable accommodation is a challenge.

The rise in rents against capped housing benefit levels means that securing private rental within Runnymede and across the South East is increasingly difficult for households on low incomes or benefits. Households that are benefit capped struggle to find anything within the borough that is affordable, ruling out private rental and in some cases, social housing which is available on an Affordable Rent equivalent to the Local Housing Allowance and therefore may be reduced by the

<sup>27</sup> Housing Act 1996, as amended

<sup>28</sup> Fitzpatrick, S et al (2018) *The Homelessness Monitor England*. London. Crisis.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid*

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation [www.jrf.org.uk/social-sharing-expansion-shared-housing-social-sector](http://www.jrf.org.uk/social-sharing-expansion-shared-housing-social-sector)



benefit cap . For these households the only avenues they have are to move to cheaper, more affordable areas or find employment so that they are no longer subjected to the cap. Data from Runnymede housing benefit department found that 109 households within the area would be subjected to the second cap that came into effect in autumn 2016. However, it is not just benefit capped households that struggle to afford housing, households with unmanageable debts also find accessing private rented housing difficult as they cannot afford the monthly costs and their debt repayment commitments. Many households who approach the Council as homeless already have significant debts which their income does not support.

The average rental price for a 2 bedroom flat in the area is £1352 per month, some £389 per month above the 2 bedroom local housing allowance rate (LHA) for the area (2 bed LHA = £963 per month). An online search for rental properties in Runnymede generated a list of 276 properties<sup>31</sup>. The lowest cost for a small 2 bedroom was £895 per month, and there were only two properties available at this rent. The highest rent was £5092 per calendar month for a 2 bedroom flat in Addlestone. This snapshot highlights how extremely difficult it is to locate affordable private rented housing for those in need. Although the Council has made provision for supporting low income households with bonds for a deposit and rent in advance, agencies usually advertise properties just above the LHA rate to exclude benefit dependent applicants.

In the financial year 2018/19 to 25 February 2019, there have been 905 approaches for housing advice, of which 290 declared that they were working and 134 of those 290 declared they are working less than 30 hours per week. A large percentage of our approaches are from people who are reliant on benefits and therefore securing private rented housing and local housing allowance rates is important to ensure households can afford their rental costs.

Not only are the rental costs extremely high which lead to the Council having to subsidise rent through housing benefit and discretionary housing payments (DHP) but any properties that are affordable are largely inaccessible. Many landlords require high initial upfront payments for rent in advance, deposit and fees but the largest barrier to accessing housing is when a landlord requires a guarantor. Most guarantors are expected to earn at least 30x the monthly rent per year or be a home owner. With this type of condition a cycle of generational homelessness within families will continue for those households who do not have parents or other family members to assist them into secure accommodation.

Although accessing and sustaining accommodation within the private rented sector is a challenge, in the absence of social housing, it is the main option we have in preventing or resolving a housing situation. The ending of a private rented assured shorthold tenancy has consistently been one of the highest reasons for homelessness within the borough and we are therefore aware that we need to target tenancy sustainment to reduce the number of households becoming homeless as a result.

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<sup>31</sup> As of 27 November 2018





We operate our own social lettings agency, Magna Carta Lettings which gives landlords the choice of a full management service or a direct letting service, an enhanced equivalent of a high street letting agent's tenant finding service. This is a scheme the Council will need to continue to invest in to help resolve housing difficulties.

Although sustaining tenancies is becoming more complicated, there is knowledge and experience within the Housing Solutions team to achieve this. Below is an example of when someone facing homelessness contacted the Council for advice and we were able to resolve their difficulty by keeping them in their existing home.

Ms Y had been renting a flat in the private sector for three years through an estate agent. She was served notice to end her tenancy due to rent arrears. Ms Y contacted the Council for assistance.

We negotiated with the landlord to postpone the eviction whilst we looked into the rent account. We were able to cross reference payments made and the rent due to evidence to the landlord that the rent account was up to date and paid in full. The landlord agreed that the rent was up to date and revoked the notice, allowing Ms Y to remain in her home.

**Case Study: Prevention work to resolve housing issue in Runnymede**

## **Considering all groups of people who are homeless or likely to become homeless**

When conducting the review of homelessness within the borough, it is essential to take into account any group of person who may be homeless or may become homeless even if they may not have approached the Council for cultural or personal reasons. This includes assessing the needs of young people, gypsies and travellers, single people, rough sleepers, families, victims of domestic abuse, households in temporary or supported housing and members of the armed forces. In our Gypsies and Traveller Accommodation Assessment<sup>32</sup>, we acknowledge the need for additional pitches and these are included in our Emerging Local Plan.

There are two public gypsy sites within Runnymede managed by Surrey County Council. It is evident that there is overcrowding on both the public sites and those in private ownership within the Borough due to the lack of alternative pitches, The overcrowding and sharing facilities exacerbates mental and physical health problems and leads to disputes between households needing additional space when a pitch becomes available.

The lack of pitches results in households reluctantly applying for assistance with bricks and mortar accommodation which can lead to social isolation and further problems. The Housing Department is working with the Planning Department to ensure that a percentage of new pitch provision is provided at Affordable Rent levels and for applicants with a local connection.

<sup>32</sup> Runnymede Traveller and Gypsy Accommodation Assessment  
<https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/article/15548/Gypsies-and-travellers-policy-documents-and-guidance->



We provide a Sanctuary project for survivors of domestic abuse that wish to remain in their own home, where safe to do so. This involves carrying out an assessment of the home and providing suitable security equipment to enable households to remain safely in their properties. Victims of domestic abuse are also able to seek advice about moving to alternate accommodation via a management transfer if in social housing stock, about options within the private rented sector or using a refuge space. We have good links with refuges to locate a safe and secure place for victims of domestic abuse to leave the abusive relationship.

We are signed up to the Armed forces covenant and we provide a priority for veterans to move within our allocation policy. We also work closely with armed forces charities to ensure members and ex members of the forces are given advice and support with any housing difficulties they experience.

### Reviewing activities carried out

An essential part of the review is to consider the activities currently carried out by all relevant agencies and organisations that contribute directly or indirectly to the prevention of homelessness and the provision of accommodation and support for homeless people within the borough.

Within Runnymede the Council is very fortunate to have excellent working relationships with our partner organisations and we actively participate in the Homelessness Task group. This group includes organisations such as Transform, RentStart, Salvation Army, HM Prison and probation service, Citizens Advice, local churches, family support services, Riverside Care and Support, Accent Group, Adult Social Care, Youth Support Services, Children Services, Your Sanctuary and Look Ahead. This list is not exhaustive and the Housing Solutions team welcome other services that can contribute to this work to join the group.

The group was set up to review progress on the Homelessness Strategy, promote information between agencies and the voluntary sector in relation to health and homelessness. The group disseminates good practice around homelessness and aims to help meet the needs of homeless households whilst providing support to improve the health care and outcomes for families and single people in temporary accommodation. This group meet quarterly and have agreed terms of reference.

The proactive work of this group in the community and the positive contribution made to the issues faced by homeless households and those living in poverty inspired the recently established FUSE project (Facilitate, Understand, Support, Empower). This is a combined group of Council officers and local voluntary groups set up to address the difficulties that some people have in accessing housing, their lack of required documentation and benefits, inability to deal with public bodies and poor presentation. This is a project the Housing Department will develop over the new few years as outlined in our objectives. This group will be able to access the Flexible Homelessness Grant for initiatives to support households through the process of improving their housing situation and to improve tenancy sustainment once accommodation is secured.

The Council appreciates that there are a lot of good organisations, many listed above that carry out activities that support those facing housing difficulties within our





borough, for example the Citizens Advice Bureau provides court desk support to households facing eviction and Runnymede RentStart, amongst other things, are funded to provide a deposit and support to enable single homeless people to access accommodation within the private rented sector.

### The resources required

The public, private and voluntary sectors can all contribute, directly or indirectly, to the prevention of homelessness and the provision of accommodation and support for homeless people.

It is evident that the role of housing services is changing following the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 as more time is invested into the administrative work of written assessments, Personalised Housing Plans and recording the required data for Government H-CLIC return. The Solutions team structure was set up with the new legislation in mind, however we will keep this service under continual review to ensure there are sufficient resources to comply with the legislation and the service is accessible and intuitive to the needs of individuals.

We have achieved great success with our Magna Carta Letting Scheme in sustaining tenancies and creating new tenancies for our households, however this comes at an expense. The net expenditure for the scheme since its inception in 2016 has been just short of £200,000.

As highlighted, there has been ‘new burden’ funding made available for the prevention of homelessness however this, as widely publicised nationally, is unlikely to be enough. We are committed to applying for any alternate Government funding bids as and when they become available in order to meet our aspirations and the needs of our residents. During the course of writing this document, we have made funding bids for the following schemes.

- Rapid Rehousing Pathway
- Access to PRS
- Move on Fund – jointly with Spelthorne, Elmbridge and Transform

Due to the size of Runnymede and the small scale of our initiatives it is difficult to attract national funding so where applicable we will make joint bids with other organisations and Local Authorities.

During the life of this document, we will ensure that we apply for any further funding the Government launch that is appropriate to meeting the needs of our borough. We will also explore other funding streams with partners where appropriate, such as LGA Innovation fund, Big Lottery and any others that we become aware of, whilst also making sure our current service is efficient.



## Progressing the last Strategy and recent achievements

Since publishing our last Homelessness Strategy in 2014, the housing sector has faced fresh challenges. However, despite the difficulties these challenges have caused, we have been able to make positive progress in addressing the housing issues within the Borough.

In our last Homelessness Strategy 2014, we set four key objectives that we intended to achieve over the life of the document. These were to;

**Objective 1: Increase access to the private rented sector**

**Objective 2: Reduce under occupancy in the social rented sector and sustaining tenancies**

**Objective 3: Build upon effective partnerships**

**Objective 4: Prevent homelessness through partnership working**

2014 Strategy Objectives

The achievements we have made since 2014 are summarised below.

- Magna Carta Lettings – MCL was launched in June 2016. The scheme was designed to attract landlords to take on our households who were at threat of homelessness. MCL is able to offer a full management service or a direct letting scheme to landlords. Since its creation MCL has successfully signed up 31 managed tenancies as well as 19 direct let properties in the private rented sector. This doesn't include the number of agent and private landlord properties households were able to secure themselves.
- Between the financial years 2014-18 we were able to assist 367 households to either remain in their home or secure alternate housing.
- We have been able to reduce the number of households in B&B, including reducing the number of nights households are placed. In 2016/17 we placed 76 households who spent on average 41 nights, in 2017/18 we placed 107 households who spent on average 31 nights and in 2018/19 to date, we have placed 32 households who have had an average length of stay of 21 nights.
- We have built Council housing for the first time since 1995 with the development of 12 units of Council houses completed in 2018 (10 x 2 bed houses and 2 x 1 bed flats)
- We have developed and grown our working relationship with MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) and MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements), including improving data recording methods to comply with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). We have also developed good working links with North West Surrey Domestic Abuse forum and Citizens Advice
- We contributed to the Government consultation for the new Domestic Abuse and Violence Bill



- In light of changing housing legislation, we have developed and grown the housing solutions service through a restructure. This has created new posts including 3 sustainment posts to assist keep people in their own homes and prevent homelessness
- We have successfully implemented the commencement of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and are successfully reporting our quarterly return figures to government through H-CLIC. The team have been provided with comprehensive training to enable them to capture the data correctly and to focus on preventing homelessness
- We have developed the housing solutions teams ethos to one of prevention and have embedded this approach with our partners
- In accordance with the new legislation (Homelessness Reduction Act 2017), we have implemented the HPA2 module of Locata<sup>33</sup>
- We have created and formed the joint Homelessness Task Group
- We have initiated the FUSE group (Facilitate, Understand, Support, Empower)
- We have built upon our good relationship with Transform. This has included: working in partnership on the conversion of a long term empty property (20 years) into 5 supported housing units, accessing £100,000 in Government Grant and utilising £375,000 of RBC capital to be recovered in rental income; contributing £50,000 of RBC grant to £50,000 Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) Empty Homes Grant to provide a family home with support; provision of an HRA property leased for use as single supported accommodation and grants of 30% of the cost of two family size properties for shared accommodation.
- We made a successful bid with partners in Surrey to the 2011 – 2015 Empty Homes Programme to get empty properties back into use, achieving 11 homes out of long term empty properties in 2015 - 2016
- We have continued our funding towards Citizens Advice and RentStart
- Enabled delivery of 106 new homes in the borough in 2017/18 and 81 in 2018/19 up until 15 January 2019 through successful Section 106 negotiations
- Acquired 4 properties in 2017/18 and 2 in 2018/19 up until 15 January 2019
- Lookahead Floating Housing Support contract has been expanded to include tenancy training
- Worked closely with the Besom project to support households to access goods such as furniture, kitchen utensils and essential household goods.
- Work with the foodbanks and in particular projects such as “eat well spend well” and “positive parenting courses”

The partnerships we have developed and the support of volunteers within the area have led to positive results for individuals, such the case study below. We are aware that we need to continue to grow and develop these relationships and form new partnerships to ensure we are providing a quality, joined up approach to households facing homelessness in Runnymede.

<sup>33</sup> Locata is housing software which is our database for recording household’s records.



Mr Z was entrenched rough sleeper who had previously refused any housing assistance. Our strong internal and external working relationships meant that we were able to engage with the necessary services to get the assessments and help that he needed.

A combination of working with Environmental services, Surrey Police and Adult Social Care, with further support from wider services and community members enabled us to achieve the positive outcome of securing accommodation and providing ongoing support to enable him to sustain the tenancy.

**Case Study: Example of partnership working meeting the needs of a Rough Sleeper in Runnymede**



## Strategy and action plan

Having carried out a review of homeless levels and potential future trends, as well as what services and activities are already in place to prevent homelessness, we have been able to formulate this strategy based on its results. Our emphasis will be on homeless prevention so, there will be areas within the objectives that span across different objectives that we hope to achieve.

### Objective One: Early intervention for homelessness prevention

The best way to tackle homelessness is to prevent it from happening in the first place. By the time a household comes to the attention of a statutory homeless service, it is often too late to meaningfully intervene as our response has to be reactive, unplanned and we are limited by the options available at such short notice.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 starts to address this as it has increased the definition of homelessness and the timescale associated with it from 28 days to 56 days, giving us more time to react and be proactive in our attempts to prevent a household from becoming homeless. The new legislation has also introduced the “Duty to Refer” which requires public bodies to refer anyone facing homeless into the local authority’s housing service of their choice with their consent. It is hoped that this earlier notification will give us a better chance of improving the housing outcomes of these households.

However effective prevention of homelessness starts much earlier than that. It is essential that we identify people at risk of crisis at an earlier stage in their journey towards homelessness and work with them to create a plan that enables them to resolve their situation.

Within this objective, we aim to achieve the following:

- Improving awareness and public knowledge more generally about local housing shortages and the factors that lead to homelessness so that people are able to be proactive in resolving their housing difficulty.<sup>34</sup>
- Maintain a high level of awareness about housing options and homelessness amongst partner agencies to ensure early referrals into the service
- Expand on the Duty to Refer pathway by exploring web based technologies for private landlords to notify us if they are going to evict their tenant or if the tenant has fallen behind with their rent so that we can intervene early to resolve the issue before it leads to eviction proceedings.
- Improving methods for social landlords, social services, refuges, support services to notify us of any housing related difficulties so that we can work to resolve them before the person is asked to leave the home
- Early intervention – engage with partners to identify potential housing issues early so that pre-crisis support can be put in place. This may include identifying management moves quickly to ensure a proactive planned move

<sup>34</sup> As highlighted in the LGiU homeless commission – road to prevention.

<https://lgiugroup.shorthandstories.com/homelessness%20the%20road%20to%20prevention/index.html>



and early identification of Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) cases that need intervention

- Improve our existing links with social services, engaging them with our service early to ensure households needs are fully assessed and given the appropriate priority
- Focus on preventing homelessness by keeping people in their current homes (where appropriate to do so), by looking at incentives for landlords and methods of ensuring rents are affordable
- Encourage applications to join a savings scheme that will enable households to save towards the initial costs associated with securing accommodation, from rent in advance to money for furniture or money towards a deposit for home ownership. Saving will be an integral part of the household budgeting work we carry out
- Grow our tenancy sustainment package to households and to landlords. This should include more detailed signposting to debt advice services, work to ensure households are in receipt of the correct welfare benefit entitlement, households are supported into employment, training or education. This will aim to reduce repeat recurring homelessness
- Improve the availability of good quality, easy to understand advice and information i.e. leaflets and handouts
- Improve the Runnymede Living & Homes website to be current and to include homeless prevention tools so that households are able to self-serve
- Monitor, review and evaluate data to look at any trends to predict future levels of homelessness
- Develop a package to enable young people to remain at home where appropriate to do so, this may include introducing a mediation package, behaviour contracts, negotiating financial arrangements
- Establish pathway plans for all supported housing schemes and any other housing options available in the area
- Recognise that homelessness, especially amongst single people may be an outcome of other problems, so we will work in partnership with agencies to ensure we provide a holistic and joined up service
- Secure suitable and sustainable housing solutions for households
- Educations – outreach work in senior schools within the Borough, offering to talk to classes about their housing options
- Explore the introduction of new technology to improve the process and service we provide
- Expand existing links with health and develop new partnerships

## Objective Two: Ensuring sufficient supply of accommodation

A shortage of affordable housing can lead to increased numbers of people being accommodated in temporary accommodation whilst waiting for settled housing to bring the main homeless duty to an end. Settled housing in this context will primarily be social housing and suitable private rented sector housing.

Whilst we will always try to prevent homelessness in the first instance, there will always be times where it is not possible to prevent someone from losing their home. In these circumstances and in the cases where we owe a prevention or relief duty





under the new Homelessness Reduction Act, we must ensure that there is sufficient accommodation available. Those homes need to be suitable and affordable. Whilst we aim to ensure sufficient supply of accommodation is available, we also aim to provide support to new tenants so that they are equipped to sustain their accommodation, reducing the chances of repeat homelessness.

As this document shows, the availability of social housing does not meet the demand and is unlikely to during the life of this document. Whilst we have started building our own Council housing and we are working with partners in the development of social and affordable housing, we are aware that we need to open up new sources of alternate housing avenues. This can be broken into three areas:

### **Social rented homes**

- We will introduce shared houses for single people to provide emergency accommodation in the borough, rather than B&B out of area. This “housing first” type approach will enable us to wrap support around these households so that their longer term housing needs can be assessed
- We will continue to make the best use of existing stock by considering mutual exchanges, reciprocal moves, downsizing incentives and support for those in Independent Retirement Living (IRL). This will include improving IRL housing.
- Explore the implementation of auto bid for under occupation. Work with households to move so that they avoid the Social Sector Size Criteria reduction to their benefit and free up accommodation needed for families.
- Review the levels of under occupation in our own stock and further develop incentives for households to downsize
- Promote Homefinder UK, HomeSwapper and other national mobility schemes to enable move on between social housing tenants
- Promote Reciprocal schemes with other social landlords for people fleeing their social tenancies due to violence or risk
- We will review our Allocations policy to take into account the Homelessness Reduction Act and to ensure we are providing reasonable preference to the correct groups
- We will review our nominations agreements with Registered Providers operating in the borough to ensure we are receiving our nomination agreement quotas and to maximise opportunities for future development
- We will increased our focus on discovering tenancy fraud and subletting with our Tenancy Management and Corporate Fraud team
- We will explore opportunities for new development and estate regeneration.
- Development and implementation of the tenancy strategy, including the use of fixed term tenancies to ensure that households no longer in need of their social housing home are assisted into a more suitable tenure property.

### **Private Rented Sector**

- We will seek to increase our options within the private rented sector, including shared properties for single people which we have not previously secured expanding the Magna Carta Letting Scheme to ensure we secure additional properties in the private rented sector for our households.



- This will include reviewing the current incentive we offer and making improvements where possible
- Renewed focus on tenancy sustainment support with direct support to landlords who let through us
- Although our focus is to secure accommodation within the borough, we will source affordable private rented housing outside of the borough where appropriate
- We will explore the opportunities to maximise the use of section 106 funding to secure family sized accommodation, mostly two bedrooms to meet demand
- Work closely with the Environmental Health and Private Sector Housing team to identify rogue landlords
- Support the Private Sector Housing team to improve the condition of the private rented sector.
- Continue with the landlord forum to build stronger relationships with landlords and to provide landlords with the knowledge and tools to be a fit and proper landlord
- Use of benefit calculators and other budgeting tools to encourage people into employment and into accommodation that they can afford i.e. those subject to the benefit cap
- Identify those moving out of private rented housing as an opportunity to discuss options to re-let the property to one of our households in need through Magna Carta Lettings.

### Supported Housing

- Continue to work in partnership with providers of supported housing
- Ensure we fill our allocated quota of spaces in schemes such as Hersham Road hostel
- Improve the move on options from the refuge in the borough
- Develop further support for rough sleepers so that they are assisted quickly, including exploring the introduction of a type of “No Second Night Out”<sup>35</sup>
- Funding bids from Government and other funding streams
- Earlier identification of those suitable for supported housing so that appropriate referrals can be made
- Work with Providers to increase the level of accommodation available to people with complex needs.

### Home Ownership

- Explore introducing a scheme to assist households into shared home ownership by providing a deposits in the form of a loan
- Ensure all shared ownership opportunities are widely advertised within the Borough, and specifically to applicants on the Housing Register and in Temporary Accommodation
- Develop a culture of aspiration to home ownership and saving towards a deposit within households that perceive themselves as trapped in the private rented sector.

<sup>35</sup> No Second Night out <http://www.nosecondnightout.org.uk/>





## Objective Three: Partnership working and holistic support

There are some households that will require a range of support services, not just the provision of accommodation in order to resolve their homelessness. This could be housing related support to enable them to sustain a tenancy or it could be personal support relating to factors such as relationship breakdown, domestic abuse, mental health problems, drug and alcohol addiction, poverty, debt or unemployment. These support packages have a key role in preventing homelessness from occurring or recurring.

We are aware that inadequate housing, homelessness and rough sleeping have a profound impact on individuals, families, communities and public services. Many who face homelessness have complex needs, whether in terms of housing, personal circumstances or health. Whilst many who approach for help are able to be supported to help themselves, others do require far more intensive support to resolve their situation. We accept that without the necessary support, tailored to each individual's needs, outcomes may not be positive and tenancies may not be sustained.

We are committed to working with our partners to develop our support package to households and to refer, where appropriate, to the specialist bed space provision across the County for complex need households. We aim to continue to grow our strong links with partner services to enable us to contribute to providing a holistic service to our service users. In order to do this we will:

- Provide tailored advice in our Personal Housing Plans (PHPs) that gives more than just housing advice. This will include providing details of smoking cessation advice, advice of how to register with a GP and a dentist.
- Improve our links with health so that we can provide a more joined up, holistic approach
- Develop the FUSE (Facilitate, Understand, Support, Empower) group so that together we can give meaningful assistance to these vulnerable groups
- Build trust and willingness of people to engage with the service through the FUSE group. Traditional models with front line staff in an office often struggle to connect to individuals and may not encourage an approach<sup>36</sup> but FUSE already engage with these individuals, producing an opportunity to support this group of people
- Introduce a winter shelter
- Introduce a place for homeless people to have showers and continue to explore other opportunities to support homeless people such as opportunities with charities like Haircuts4homeless<sup>37</sup>
- Continue to work with foodbanks to ensure vulnerable people are able to eat but also to provide further support to enable them to become independent of the foodbanks
- Ensure that efficient and effective referrals are made into support providers quickly for people in need of assistance

<sup>36</sup> LGiU as above.

<sup>37</sup> Haircuts for homeless <https://www.haircuts4homeless.com/>



- Improve our partnership working both internal and external, holding regular meetings to keep each other up to date
- Promote access to training, employment, volunteering and education
- Continue to support the Runnymede Job Club and liaise closely with the Department for Work and Pensions ensuring households get all the financial benefits and support to access employment and training that they are entitled to.
- Promote the national “Street Link” initiative for reporting vulnerable people by the public

## Objective Four: Meet the needs of those in temporary accommodation

On average during 2018/19 there were 90 households occupying temporary accommodation provided by Runnymede Borough Council, the majority within Runnymede housing stock properties and the remaining in accommodation leased from the private rented sector. On 15 January 2019 we had 95 households in temporary housing, 83 in Runnymede owned stock, 10 leased from private landlords and 1 leased from a registered provider. We have made progress in reducing the usage of B&B as outlined above, although we acknowledge that using this form of accommodation is unavoidable in certain circumstances, we are committed to keeping usage low. We aspire to house any household requiring emergency housing<sup>38</sup> into temporary accommodation within the borough and to date, excluding B&B placements, we have been able to achieve this.

We are aware that the needs, aspirations and hopes of households living in our temporary accommodation are diverse in nature and we therefore must not have a singular approach to helping them sustain their temporary tenancies and when we assist them into settled housing. Anecdotal feedback from residents in temporary accommodation is that they feel their lives are “on hold” whilst they wait for a permanent move. The uncertainty of where they may move to can affect the choices they make in seeking work, schooling for their children or simply creating ties in the community.

Within our temporary accommodation population there is a significant portion of households who are not working and are heavily reliant on welfare benefits. Many of these households have told us that they feel only an offer of social housing would meet their needs, despite the fact social housing is becoming a much less realistic option due to the shortages in supply. The unrealistic perception that social housing is the only option means households will often be very disappointed when they are offered private rented property rather than a social tenancy. The Council must where possible discharge the main duty to households with an offer in the private sector to ensuring there is sufficient move on from TA and that households on the Housing Register are still able to access social housing. Therefore, in the implementation of this strategy, we will:

<sup>38</sup> Subject to eligibility in accordance with the Housing Act 1996 as amended



- Continue to ensure B&B use is kept to a minimum, where possible. To do this we will set up the shared houses for singles in partnership with Registered Providers and,
- We will proactively work on relieving household's homelessness that enter B&B to provide an alternative before they need to be given temporary accommodation
- We will set up two RBC owned shared houses for single homeless to act as emergency housing, this will include providing a bed pack and move on advice and support
- Provide realistic expectation advice upon sign up to temporary accommodation to assist with a culture change of homelessness and to provide households with the tools to resolve their own difficulties
- Explore the introduction of tenancy training and look at online models of delivery for households in temporary accommodation or in need of alternate accommodation. This will include tenancy management skills.
- We will help households to prepare for move on, ensure that they are on the Housing Register and ensure verification checks are complete to prevent a delay in them moving. We will also explore options within the private rented sector for households as this is largely the quickest route into alternate accommodation. This will include explaining financial expectations such as the need for rent in advance.
- We will continue to explore the availability of private rented sector accommodation offers (PRSO)
- Ensure rent arrears are monitored, kept low and addressed efficiently when they do arise
- Provide a sustainment package to assist households to ensure they are in receipt of the correct benefits, supported into employment, volunteering, or training
- Targeted help such as financial and debt management
- Signposting and referrals to relevant services such as health
- Team dedicated to households in Temporary Accommodation providing support to prepare for move on.
- Develop monitoring systems to track outcomes for households in TA

We are committed to supporting those that go into temporary accommodation to be given the tools to move on quickly and that whilst they are in our accommodation, they are signposted to all of the relevant support services in a holistic way.



Ms A applied as homeless following the relationship breakdown with her partner and she had no where she or her child could stay. She also has various medical needs. She made a homeless application and was placed into emergency temporary accommodation.

She had no furniture so referrals were made to local charities and furniture projects for assistance. She began to accrue rent arrears for the temporary accommodation as she hadn't provided the required information to housing benefit. Her Sustainment Officer supported her so that her benefit claim could be assessed and paid and then worked with her to clear the rent arrears. Whilst she was accommodated in temporary accommodation, she was given support to prepare her for move on to more permanent housing.

#### Case Study: Meeting the needs of those in Temporary accommodation in Runnymede

### Delivering and monitoring the plan

The Action Plan outlines how these main objectives will be achieved and monitored through targets timescales. We will continue to research best practice to inform delivery and we will continue to aspire to meet Government targets. We will continue to assess how we meet the needs of the borough and how we can better use data, IT and work in a joined up way.

The Council is aware that change has regularly impacted the housing and welfare benefits sectors recently which has implications for the way we work and meeting the targets we set out to achieve. We therefore acknowledge that this document needs to be flexible and adaptable to meet the impacts of further change in this complex environment.

To ensure we are meeting the objectives in this plan, the Housing Solutions team will collect monthly performance indicators. This data will feed into the strategy document which will be reviewed at least annually to monitor implementation. The outcome of these reviews will be fed directly into our Homelessness Task Group who will be able to monitor how we are progressing against our aims.

At Appendix C we have set out the action plan detailing the proposed time scales for achieving these objectives, who will take the lead role in this work and the measures of success.



## Consultation

We would like to thank the organisations and members of the public who have worked with us and for their contributions to the development of this strategy. This input has been vital to enable us to shape our action plan to prevent homelessness and end rough sleeping within the borough.

### Approach

To ensure robust consultation, staff across the organisation have been involved in the consultation period along with a range of external partners and stakeholders.

As part of the development of this document a series of consultation opportunities have taken place to inform the strategy. A project group of staff who work within the Councils Housing Solutions team, covering homelessness, allocations, tenancy sustainment and temporary accommodation were involved. This task group were able to highlight the direct issues they experience in the performance of their duties to prevent homelessness and allocating social homes and to highlight objectives they would like to achieve.

We also consulted with other key internal partners such as; housing benefit, environmental health, housing maintenance and housing management. Since a large proportion of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness will be vulnerable adults or have children in their care, we have sought assistance from Social Services to formulate the strategy, this includes Adult Social Care and Children & Young Person's Services.

A wider group of stakeholders were also consulted. These include; the Runnymede and Spelthorne Homelessness Task Group, the general public through publication on our website, elected Councillors & members, Registered Providers of social housing and the voluntary sector. An online survey was produced and made available for comments that then fed into this document.



## Appendix A – Equality Impact Assessment

This is available as a separate document. If you would like to see a copy of this please request this directly by emailing [housingsolutions@runnymede.gov.uk](mailto:housingsolutions@runnymede.gov.uk) or contacting Housing Solutions on 01932 838383.

## Appendix B – Homelessness Review Data

There are a number of figures and tables produced as a result of the review outlined in the Homeless Review chapter however the full review paperwork, facts, figures and findings is available on request without charge.

In gathering the data for the review, we collected amongst others, the following:

- Homeless casework records and other local data
- Trends in homeless approaches and underlying causes
- Which cohorts may be more likely to become homeless or threatened with
- Profile of household who have experienced homelessness in district
- Equality monitoring data – relation to applications and outcomes
- Range of factors that may affect future levels of homelessness
- Person and structural factors that may contribute to becoming homeless
- Planned legislation or policy change that are likely to impact on levels of homelessness for particular groups in the district



## Appendix C – Action Plan

Ref	Objectives	Lead Role	Partners	Timeline	Measure of Success
<b>Objective One: Early intervention for homeless prevention</b>					
1.1	Improve awareness and public knowledge of housing shortages and options to prevent homelessness	RBC Housing	Homelessness Task Group, FUSE, Communications team, Schools, Environmental health	End July 2020	<p>Awareness raised through events, websites and general public.</p> <p>Improve health links i.e. by host housing surgeries in GPs to ensure early referrals from health partners</p> <p>Introduce housing advice and budgeting skills presentations into schools</p>
1.2	<p>Introduce a landlord route to notify us of issues with tenants</p> <p>Use web based technologies to support landlords and tenants to sustain their homes</p>	<p>Magna Carta Lettings Staff</p> <p>Housing team</p>	<p>Landlords</p> <p>Housing benefit</p> <p>Environmental health</p>	Year 1	Landlord route or referral process in place to allow early notification of a housing issue
1.3	Partners notifying RBC of potential housing issues early so that proactive work can be undertaken to prevent homelessness. Introduce a referral mechanism to enable early identification	Partners, such as Homelessness Task Group members	RBC Housing team	Year 1	<p>Early notification received into the Council by expanding on the duty to refer to non-statutory partners</p> <p>Joint working and joint projects with partners to resolve housing issues early</p>





Ref	Objectives	Lead Role	Partners	Timeline	Measure of Success
1.4	Improve links with social services to meet the needs of households	RBC housing, Surrey CC	Children Centres	Years1-5	<p>Social Services involved early to support households in need</p> <p>Referral pathway for homeless households who may be intentionally homeless so that social services can support to relieve homelessness</p> <p>Attendance and development of the Council's health and wellbeing group</p>
1.5	Focus on sustaining homes and keeping people in existing accommodation, where appropriate	RBC housing team, housing benefits, environmental health, Magna Carta Lettings	<p>Social Services, prison and probation services, health services such as hospitals and GPs</p> <p>RBC Community services</p>	Year 1-5	<p>Package developed to keep young people at home, such as mediation</p> <p>Expand on budgeting advice and debt management.</p> <p>Ensure DFG (Disabled Facilities Grant) is used to resolve housing issues, including improving discharge from hospital services. DFG policy to be reviewed to achieve value for money and short timescales in procurement of DFG works.</p>
1.6	Ensure there is a saving scheme	RBC housing, policy	Citizen Advice	Year 1-2	Ensure an easy to use and



Ref	Objectives	Lead Role	Partners	Timeline	Measure of Success
	option available to households so that they can plan towards rent in advance, deposits, furniture	team	Boom		<p>accessible saving option is available to homeless households</p> <p>Explore joint matching savings up to a certain value to encourage savings</p> <p>Improve awareness through Personalised Housing Plans (PHPs) and advice to household's approaches of the costs associated with housing and moving.</p>
1.7	Grow the sustainment package, support with budgeting advice, ensuring households are in receipt of the correct benefits, signposted to debt services, encouraged into work, training, volunteering or education	RBC sustainment team, Magna Carta Lettings, Job Centre	Credit Unions, Citizens Advice, FUSE, Communications team	Year 1-3	<p>Customers are provided with a holistic service when approaching for housing advice, this will include detailed advice in the PHP</p> <p>Expand support to customers placed through Magna Carta lettings, regular viewings and support for both the tenant and landlord</p> <p>Produce leaflets and handouts explaining how to sustain their tenancy</p>



Ref	Objectives	Lead Role	Partners	Timeline	Measure of Success
					A pathway to assist homeless households into work, training and volunteering is established
1.8	Improve the availability of good quality, easy to understand information	RBC housing	Homelessness Task Group, communications team		Leaflets and handouts produced  Improved and details advice included in PHPs
1.9	Redesign website to include self-serve tools	RBC housing, ICT	Communication team	1-3	Updated website to reflect legislative changes, easy to use referral mechanisms for duty to refer and early notification of housing issues  Website that provides advice so that customers can self-serve
1.10	Establish clear and up to date pathway plans within the area	RBC housing, Surrey Housing Needs Group	Homelessness Task Group, Registered Providers, Surrey CC	Year 1	Pathway plans are clear, up to date and in place in Runnymede for referrals from hospitals, prison, care leaving services
1.11	Monitor, review and evaluate data to predict future trends of homelessness	RBC housing	Homelessness Task Group	Years 1-5	Regular data collection through HCLIC and internal reporting mechanisms
1.12	Sustain tenancies at threat due to financial difficulties through a Prevention Fund provided by RBC	RBC Housing		April 2019	Households assisted to remain in their current home where it is suitable for their



Ref	Objectives	Lead Role	Partners	Timeline	Measure of Success
	from the Flexible Homelessness Grant				needs.
<b>Objective Two: Ensuring sufficient supply of accommodation</b>					
2.1	Set up shared houses for single homeless people	RBC housing, maintenance team	FUSE	Year 1	Two shared house projects set up and operational, one for males and one for females  Support to move on and provide a holistic service to single homeless and rough sleepers  Explore a pilot for housing first model – providing accommodation and low level support.
2.2	Continue to make best use of existing housing stock	RBC housing, policy team, tenancy management			Mutual exchanges Downsizers Reciprocals Improve the perception of IRL to attract active downsizers. (Independent Retirement Living)
2.3	Review Allocations Scheme	RBC housing, Homelessness Task Group	Communications team, internal and external stake holders such as	Year 1-2	New/updated Allocations Scheme in place and effective in ensuring households in need are given priority and



Ref	Objectives	Lead Role	Partners	Timeline	Measure of Success
			social services, registered social landlords, providers of supported services and housing		there is access to Social Housing through the Register so as to not incentivise homelessness.
2.4	Review nomination agreements and maximise opportunities for future development	RBC housing, policy team, planning	Registered providers	Year 1-5	Regular monitoring of nominations agreements  Maximum Affordable Housing achieved in all Section 106 agreements  New social housing
2.5	Focus on reducing tenancy and social housing fraud	RBC housing, corporate fraud team	Registered providers, Homelessness Task Group	Year 1-2	Expand existing fraud prevention and detection work for housing cases
2.6	Explore estate regeneration	RBC housing, policy, planning	Registered providers and private developers	Year 1-5	Regeneration started of estates within the borough
2.7	Implement the Tenancy Strategy	RBC tenancy management	Housing policy, communications	Year 1	Tenancy strategy implemented and being used by registered providers  Tenancy policy introduced for RBC tenancies
2.8	Expand and develop Magna Carta Lettings	RBC housing, Magna Carta Lettings	Private landlords	Year 1-3	Explore new incentives for landlords to assist tenants such as those without access



Ref	Objectives	Lead Role	Partners	Timeline	Measure of Success
					<p>to a guarantor or 6 month's rent up front</p> <p>Explore options for those found to be intentionally homeless</p> <p>Expand the service to meet the needs of more households and to get new landlords on board</p>
<b>2.9</b>	Focus on tenancy sustainment package and improve relationships with landlords	RBC housing, Magna Carta Lettings	Private landlords, Homelessness Task Group, FUSE	Year 1-3	<p>Continue to host landlord forums and events</p> <p>Provide information to landlords of the services we can provide encouraging early notification of issues to sustain tenancies.</p> <p>Introduce tenancy training for tenants and ensure tenants are ready for move on before securing accommodation</p>
<b>2.10</b>	Explore shared ownership housing and access to within the borough	RBC housing, policy team, planning	Registered providers, Help to buy agents	Year 2-5	Explore the opportunity of matching a tenants deposit to buy a home up to a certain limit by way of an interest free loan



Ref	Objectives	Lead Role	Partners	Timeline	Measure of Success
					Encourage customers to prevent their homelessness by exploring home ownership offers
2.11	Develop support for rough sleepers	RBC housing, policy, Homelessness Task Group, FUSE	Voluntary and community sector partners	Year 1-5	<p>Introduce shared house scheme for single homeless</p> <p>Explore a model of donation point to fund towards FUSE activities.</p> <p>Introduction of access to a shower for rough sleepers</p> <p>Access to food, clothing, health checks.</p> <p>Developing links with charities such as Haircuts4Homeless on a local scale.</p>
2.12	Continue to apply for relevant government funding for new initiatives	RBC housing, policy	MHCLG	Years 1-5	<p>Funding bid submitted for all relevant government funding or other funding streams to improve the homeless service</p> <p>Successful bid achieved and implemented including monitoring of outcomes.</p>





Ref	Objectives	Lead Role	Partners	Timeline	Measure of Success
<b>Objective Three: Partnership working and holistic support</b>					
3.1	Enhanced Personal Housing Plans, incorporating more than just housing advice	RBC housing	Homelessness Task Group, FUSE, health and wellbeing group	April 2019	Enhanced PHPs produced and given to households facing homelessness. These to include information about health, gambling advice, drink, drug and smoking secession. To include signposting to debt and credit unions and to generally give more information than just housing advice
3.2	Develop the FUSE group to give meaningful assistance to vulnerable groups	RBC housing, FUSE group	Homelessness Task Group, charities	Years 1 - 5	Introduce access to showers for homeless  Set up a winter shelter (action 3.3)  Research best practice Nationally and abroad to develop our own projects
3.3	Introduce a winter shelter within the	RBC housing,	Charities, volunteers	Years 1-	Winter shelter set up and



Ref	Objectives	Lead Role	Partners	Timeline	Measure of Success
	borough	Homelessness Task Group, FUSE		2	operational  Develop a package of move on support available to those in need of a winter shelter
3.4	Work with foodbank to give support to the users so that they can become independent of this resource	RBC housing, social services, Runnymede Foodbank	FUSE	Year 1-3	Develop a package to include budgeting advice and support to households in need of foodbank support  Signpost to services to support affordable and healthy eating
3.5	Continue and improve strong partnership relationships	RBC housing, Homelessness Task Group, FUSE	Registered Providers, social service, supported housing providers	Year 1-5	Continue to work together and develop services for the benefit of our mutual client groups  Develop new incentives and projects to best meet the needs of households
<b>Objective Four: Meet the needs of those in temporary accommodation</b>					
4.1	Ensure B&B use is minimal	RBC housing, social services	Homelessness Task Group, FUSE	Years 1-5	Set up of shared houses for single people  Maintain low levels of B&B usage by earlier intervention to prevent homelessness



Ref	Objectives	Lead Role	Partners	Timeline	Measure of Success
					<p>Ensure efficient move on from B&amp;B to more sustainable housing</p> <p>Assess levels and trends of homeless approaches to ensure appropriate levels of housing are available, both private, social and temporary</p>
4.2	Provide realistic advice to those entering TA	RBC housing, tenancy management	Social services, FUSE	Year 1-2	<p>Develop PHPs to provide advice and assistance going beyond just housing advice.</p> <p>Ensure households are aware of limited social housing and that they need to explore all housing options such as private rental</p> <p>Ensure households are ready to move at short notice</p>
4.3	Introduce tenancy training and life skills to those in need in TA	RBC housing Sustainment, Benefits	RentStart, Citizens Advice, FUSE	Year 1-3	<p>Explore the opportunity to provide tenancy training</p> <p>Explore the opportunities for online training for tenants to prepare them for a tenancy</p>



Ref	Objectives	Lead Role	Partners	Timeline	Measure of Success
					Assess income and expenditure to provide budgeting advice
4.4	Ensure TA households are ready and prepared for move on and households are moved on promptly	RBC housing sustainment	FUSE, social services, Magna Carta	Year 1-3	<p>Tenants are supported to save towards the initial costs needed to move i.e. rent in advance, this could be through a credit union</p> <p>Tenants in debt will be signposted to debt advice services to help manage their debts and provide budgeting advice</p> <p>Tenants are given the advice and tools to be able to look for their own housing solution i.e. in the private sector or home ownership</p>
4.5	Ensure rent arrears are kept to a minimum and addressed effectively when they occur	RBC housing sustainment	FUSE	Year 1	<p>Active monitoring of rent payments and support for customers to ensure their rents are paid in full and on time.</p> <p>Efficient action taken when rent arrears form to ensure they are supported to clear their accounts</p>



Ref	Objectives	Lead Role	Partners	Timeline	Measure of Success
					Regular visits to TA to give support and assistance to ensure there are no tenancy breaches
4.6	Provide a Solutions approach, not just housing. I.e. support to get people back to work, education, training or volunteering. Signposting to relevant service such as debt and health	RBC housing, sustainment, FUSE, job centre	Social services, Citizens Advice, voluntary agencies	Year 1-4	Households supported into employment, volunteering and training  Households receive a benefit assessment to ensure in receipt of all appropriate benefits and supported to register for those entitled to but not receiving.

